# CHINESE LITERATURE

8

1963

Front Cover: *Running Yaks* by Wu Tso-jen

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**No. 8, 1963**

# CHINESE LITERATURE

*monthly*

EDITOR: Mao Tun

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Yeh Chun-chien

Published by Foreign Languages Press

Pai Wan Chuang, Peking (37), China

*Printed in the People's Republic of China*

# A Conference of Writers And Artists

*— On the Militant Task of China's Literature and Art Today —*

The Third National Committee of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles recently held its second enlarged conference in Peking. Its deliberations centred on how to strengthen the literary and art front and enable literature and art to play a fully militant role in the current internal and international situation.

Members of the national committee and representatives of the artists and writers of all the provinces and autonomous regions, numbering more than 380, attended the conference. Kuo Mo-jo (poet and playwright), chairman of the federation, presided over the conference sessions which were attended by the vice-chairmen of the federation: Mao Tun (novelist); Chou Yang (literary and art critic); Pa Chin (novelist); Lao Sheh (novelist and playwright); Hsu Kuang-ping (writer and widow of the great writer Lu Hsun); Tien Han (playwright); Hsia Yen (playwright); Tsai Chu-sheng (film director); Ma Ssu-tsung (composer and violinist); Fu Chung (critic) and Yang Han-sheng (playwright).

Premier Chou En-lai, besides meeting informally with the conference participants, gave an important address to the conference in session. In it, he called on the nation's writers and artists to be revolutionary writers and artists and take an active part in the class struggle both at home and abroad. Writers and artists, he said, should take a firm proletarian stand and have high revolutionary ideals. They should steel and remould themselves in the long and complex class struggles which had to be waged; they should strengthen themselves in proletarian ideology and in the proletarian style of work so as to be able to stand all tests

of storm and stress which they might be called upon to meet. He called on them to devote all their efforts to strengthening the revolutionary literary and art front.

Th Premier's speech was warmly applauded and supported by the conference participants. They expressed their determination to answer the call of the Communist Party, to play a greater role as literary and art workers and to remain staunch for ever as revolutionary writers and artists.

Kuo Mo-jo, in his opening speech as chairman, introduced the various matters put on the agenda.

Chou Yang, vice-chairman of the federation, delivered an address entitled "Strengthen the Literary and Art Front; Oppose Modern Revisionism!" Conference participants held group discussions. Members of the national committee of the federation Lao Sheh; Chen Huang-mei (film critic); Mao Tun; Chao Shu-li (novelist); Hsieh Ping-hsin (writer); Liu Kai-chu (sculptor); An Po (composer); Hsiao Wen-yen (actress); Ma Ssu-tsung; Lu Chi (composer); Tai Ai-lien (dancer); Yuan Hsueh-fen (actress); Chen Chi-tung (playwright) and Tien Han spoke at the sessions on various aspects of literature and art.

The conference reviewed the achievements of China's literary and art workers in various fields since the Third (1960) National Congress of Chinese Writers and Artists. It was agreed that guided by the Party's line that literature and art should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers and the cause of socialism, and by the policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend," and "weeding through the old to let the new emerge," China's literature and art had made many fresh gains in the past two years and more. The conference noted that there was greater variety in subject-matter, genre, form and style in the literary and art works produced, and that a considerable number of works of a fairly high level both artistically and ideologically had appeared in literature, the theatre, cinema, the representational arts (painting, graphic art and sculpture), music, the dance, *chuyi* balladry, photography and other fields. These works, reflecting the history of the revolutionary struggles or of life in the contemporary socialist revolution and socialist construction, portraying pace-setters among the masses today or historical personages, manifested the spirit of the new age, educated and

encouraged the broad masses of the people, and were therefore warmly received by them. China's literary and art work as a whole was characterized as lively and healthy.

The conference pointed out at the same time the shortcomings and problems which existed in our literary and art effort. The reflection of the actual struggles in literature and art was not powerful enough, the contents of some works were rather thin; some literary and art workers had in recent years allowed their ties with the broad labouring masses to weaken; some harmful bourgeois influences and other unhealthy features had left their marks in the literary and art front. The conference agreed that positive efforts should be made to overcome these defects.

The conference discussed the new situation in the revolutionary struggle both at home and abroad, and all came to understand more clearly what an important militant task rested on the shoulders of literature and art. The conference stressed that the nation's writers and artists should hold still higher the banners of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung's thinking and resolutely oppose imperialism, the reactionaries in all countries and modern revisionism as well as their influence in the realm of literature and art. The conference discussions made it clear that in the sharp class struggles which were now raging in the international arena, all truly revolutionary writers and artists were faced with the following question: should they take up their position on the anti-imperialist front, safeguard the interests of socialism and support the people of all countries in their revolutionary struggles, or should they fawn upon and capitulate to imperialism, slander socialism and break the people's revolutionary militant will? Should they use works of art and literature to reflect the revolutionary struggles of the masses, eulogize the heroism and collectivism of the masses in their labour and revolutionary struggles and praise the new people and new personalities of the new age, or should they stand aloof from the mass struggle, separate themselves from the common destiny of the people and immerse themselves in descriptions of the "fate of the individual" and the exalting of so-called "personal happiness" treated in isolation, which in effect means publicizing the individualist world outlook of the bourgeoisie? Should revolutionary socialist art and literature fly their own colours, with new content and new styles in

radical contrast to the various schools of bourgeois literature and art, or should they willingly serve as the rump of western bourgeois literature and art, join them in their cesspool and hail the decadent as wonderful, as "innovation"? The socialist art and literature of the world are undergoing rigorous tests. Certain former communist writers, noted the conference, had discarded the banner of proletarian revolution and become fanatical preachers and disseminators of revisionist thought as well as popular figures with imperialism and the bourgeoisie.

This phenomenon of degeneration in the ranks of world socialist literature and art drew the unanimous condemnation of the conference. It pointed out that Chinese writers and artists should pay close attention to the course of the class struggle in the ideological field of world literature and art, and that they should hold high the banners of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung's thinking on the literary and art front and wage a resolute struggle against the adverse current of modern revisionism. They should maintain vigilance at all times and resolutely prevent the growth of revisionist and all other forms of bourgeois ideology in Chinese literary and artistic circles, and use their work in literature and art to serve even more effectively the workers, peasants and soldiers, the cause of socialism and the revolutionary struggles of the world's people.

The conference agreed that Chinese writers and artists should identify themselves with the new revolutionary era in order to better serve the workers, peasants and soldiers and socialism with their literature and art. There exists a fundamental difference between Chinese writers and artists on the one hand and modern revisionists on the other in regard to their assessment of the present age. Analysing the present age from the point of view of the class struggle of the proletariat, Chinese writers and artists hold that it is unprecedentedly favourable for the revolution in all countries. In contrast, the modern revisionists have been declaring loudly that the present age is one of "positive coexistence" and "peaceful growth into socialism." Consequently they see no need for literature and art to portray the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and the working masses; and declare that the one thing that is needed is to preach supra-class "humanism" and "love for all men." Chinese writers and artists

are resolutely opposed to this nonsense of modern revisionism. They are determined to embrace the new revolutionary age wholeheartedly and join the broadest sections of the world's people. Only by so doing can they create works that are needed by the people. Large numbers of excellent works depicting the Chinese people's revolutionary struggles had been produced by Chinese writers and artists, the conference noted, but they still had a lot to do, to create still more and better works, particularly those describing the socialist revolution and socialist construction.

The conference held that literature and art should make further efforts to reflect the fine revolutionary spirit of the Chinese people and the various contradictions and struggles in the present age. It held that writers and artists should see that, within a socialist society and within the ranks of the people, there still existed contradictions between the working class and the bourgeoisie, between the socialist road and capitalist road, and all kinds of other open and hidden class struggles, and that these contradictions were often entangled with the contradictions between the progressive and the backward, between the right and the wrong within the ranks of the working people. In their creative work, writers and artists should not dodge or cover up these contradictions and struggles, but should study and present them from a class and class-struggle point of view. Works devoid of conflict were liked by nobody.

The conference emphasized that to portray the new, people's epoch truthfully, the cardinal point was for literary and art workers to identify themselves with the broad masses of the labouring people, with the workers, peasants and soldiers. To go to the factories, to the villages and army units, to participate to a certain extent in labour and public work at the basic levels and take an active part in the struggles of the masses of workers and peasants was an established system which should be persisted in over long periods; it was a fundamental way in which literary and art workers could integrate themselves with the masses. Naturally, writers and artists in different fields of work and of different ages in carrying out this principle should adopt different forms suited to their conditions. The opinion of the conference was that the question of whether literary and art workers could identify themselves with the workers and peasants was a ques-

tion that concerned the fundamental direction for the development of literature and art, a question of the correct solution of the relation between popularization in literature and art and elevation of the level of literature and art, a question of making the new literature and art more national and popular, and what was more important, a question of whether we should always remain revolutionaries and revolutionary workers in literature and art.

The conference pointed out that the policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend," and "weeding through the old to let the new emerge" was the Party's set policy towards literary and artistic work, that the prerequisite of this policy was to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, and the cause of socialism and that its object was to develop a new, socialist, national literature and art through emulation and struggle. It was unthinkable that in applying this policy there should be all plain sailing and no struggle. This was a process of competition and struggle between various theories of art, with various political orientations, and between works of literature and art in various styles and of various political attitudes, a process in which Marxist thought fought with non-Marxist and anti-Marxist thought. The conference called on writers and artists to consolidate and extend the supremacy and leading position of the new, revolutionary, socialist literature and art and Marxist thought on the entire literary and artistic front and the ideological front as a whole; since literature and art were activities linking millions upon millions of the masses and were weapons of the class struggle, first place should be given to their educational role; at the same time the people's needs for healthy cultural recreation should not be neglected. The conference called on writers and artists to strive to master the creative method combining revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism and produce works with a revolutionary and rich ideological content. As for subject-matter, genre, form, and style, there should be many and they should be permitted to compete freely. In literature and art, said the conference participants, what was of first importance was content, not form. It was always fruitless to discuss form apart from content. Writers and artists were encouraged, in order to give expression to new content, to search

for and work out new forms which the broad masses would accept and love.

The conference also discussed the proper approach to China's cultural heritage and how to create literary and artistic works which were national and popular in character. The unanimous view was that the splendid legacy of the national culture should be accepted and carried forward critically, for any splendid heritage contains both fine essence and dregs. We must not swallow anything and everything uncritically, still less take the feudal dregs for the fine democratic essence. As to the outstanding and progressive works of literature and art of foreign countries, we must learn from them but not transplant them indiscriminately. All literary and artistic works must have their own national form and characteristics. Foreign forms should be remoulded in accordance with the reality of China and its national characteristics so as to make them acceptable to the majority of the people and to enrich and enhance the already existing national forms. The wholesale transplanting of what is foreign was a manifestation of the most shiftless dogmatism in the sphere of art. We had always opposed such dogmatism.

Discussions were also held on the strengthening of literary and art criticism, the improvement of literary and art magazines, the training of literary and art workers, and other questions.

Delegates to the conference held that writers and artists should give more of their attention to the rural areas and the provision of socialist education for the broad masses of peasantry, especially the young peasants, in order to help consolidate and develop the collective economy, inspire the peasants with even greater enthusiasm for productive work and meet their daily growing cultural needs.

Among the speakers at the conference were representatives of literary and art organizations and individuals who had made outstanding contributions to literature and art and who attended the conference on invitation. They included Lo Kuang-pin, one of the co-authors of the novel *Red Crag*; Huo Shu-chen, leader of the women's mobile movie team of Shuangcheng County, Heilungkiang Province, which had been very active in the great northern wasteland; Pu Yang, leader of the Wusih opera troupe of Chiating County, Shanghai, which over a long period of time

toured and gave performances in the villages; and literary and art workers in the People's Liberation Army, Chang Tse-yi and Meng Hsiang-tseng, the artist Huang Chou and the photographer Yuan Ling. They spoke of their experience in going among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, in identifying themselves with them and in serving them. They also outlined their experience in encouraging creative work and helping young writers. Their addresses were warmly welcomed by all the conference participants.

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*White Lotus and Water-bird* (Chinese ink and colour) by Hsieh Chih-liu ▶

Hsieh Chih-liu was born in Changchow, Kiangsu Province in 1910. For more than twenty years, he has been studying traditional Chinese painting and classical art, including the ancient frescoes in the Tunhuang Caves of Kansu in China's northwest. In recent years, he has devoted most of his time in research work on the ancient calligraphy and paintings in museums in various parts of China. Flowers, birds and animals constitute the theme of most of his paintings. He used to follow the meticulous style of traditional painting but *White Lotus and Water-bird* is one of his recent works in the freehand style.

霜潔白蓮香
白柴天白

# Stormy Years

Below we publish the first thirteen sections of Sun Li's latest novel, *Stormy Years*. Sun Li is familiar to many of our readers from stories which have appeared in our magazine: *The Blacksmith and the Carpenter* (1961, No. 7), *Lotus Creek* (1959, No. 10), *Little Sheng and Little Chin* (1960, No. 4), *Parting Advice* (1962, No. 5), *The Marshes* and *Recollections of the Hill Country* (1962, No. 9). Delicacy of touch, deep feeling and strong local colour contribute to Sun Li's distinctive style.

The whole story of *Stormy Years* runs to more than three hundred thousand words and is set against the background of the Chinese people's war of resistance against Japanese aggression in the thirties. In 1937, when the Japanese militarists launched a full-scale attack on China, Chiang Kai-shek's clique in the Kuomintang adopted a policy of capitulation with no regard for national independence and the suffering of the people, ordering the troops in north China to withdraw to the south. The people in the north were confused and did not know how to organize resistance until the Red Army which had reached the north after a long march from the south helped the people of the central Hopei plain to set up strong resistance bases in the rear of the Japanese forces.

Sun Li gives an impassioned account of how the people of central Hopei, led by the Chinese Communist Party, joined in the resistance movement and dedicated their lives to the great cause of national liberation. Chun-erh and Mang-chung, the chief characters in the novel, are ordinary peasant youngsters, but they are steeled in the crucible of war until they become loyal and resolute fighters for their motherland. The author's subtle characterization and realistic descriptions enable us to relive those stirring days and share the griefs and joys of the characters in the book during this heroic period.

In the next issue we shall publish another selection from the novel.

A great drought gripped the central Hopei plain all the spring and summer of 1937. That May the River Huto dried up and hot winds, laden with swirling sand, blasted the russet knot-grass and foxtails along its banks. Wild flowers opened at night to wither away the next day. Dry as it was, however, the peasants foresaw a bad flood later on in the year. But the rain held off right up to early June, when merchants from Peking and Paoting coming home to spend the summer brought the villagers news of the Japanese invasion of northern China.

The peasants of Tzuwuchen used to rest at noon in the shade of trees on the big dike north of the village. Under a great elm at a curve in the dike two girls, sitting face to face, were spinning yarn. Judging by their clothes and appearance they were sisters, one in her mid-teens, the other in her late twenties. The elder was rather pale, her face somewhat care-worn. The younger, on the other hand, seemed bubbling over with optimism and enthusiasm.

The leaves above their heads were utterly still. Cicadas were shrilling. From time to time droppings from caterpillars fell to the ground. Far off a covered cart came into sight and the girls caught glimpses of its red mudguards and wheels behind crops golden and green, some high, some low. Two large mules were pulling the cart at a spanking pace, swishing their tails in the broiling noonday sun.

The sisters turned to look.

"Someone's coming home!" said the elder.

"Let's see if it's my brother-in-law!" The younger sprang to her feet.

"Don't you miss our dad?"

"I miss them all, but missing them won't bring them back!" She stood on tiptoe, straining her eyes, then sat down abruptly and picked up her spindle again.

"What a let-down!" she grumbled. "It's One-eyed Tien's carriage bringing that son of his back from Paoting. None of *our* men ever come back. I wonder if one of them will come this year?"

The cart bowled past them to the village gate and Old Chang, the carter, jumped down from one shaft to flourish his long, red-tasselled whip and call out a cheerful greeting. His young master,

of whom nothing but one ankle in black silk hose could be seen, peered out to look at the girls, who bent their heads.

The sisters' name was Wu. The elder was called Chiu-fen, the younger Chun-erh. The elder had married into a family at Five-dragon Temple.

Five-dragon Temple was a small village on the south bank of the Huto, where the river raging down from the southwest made a sharp, precipitate turn. The villagers had built a high dike reinforced with wooden planks at this bend, for it was a notoriously dangerous stretch.

Many a time flood waters had swamped the village. Sometimes they swept everything away, leaving only a gaping pit. Sometimes they silted the whole place up with sand as high as the roof tops. But the little village never gave in to the flood. As soon as gongs sounded the warning, all the men and women, old and young alike, rushed out to the dike. They battled to stop the breach with anything that came to hand, taking doors and window-frames, rafters and tiles from their houses. Women lugged over cases, chests, tables and chairs, or even brought along their bedding and mats. One year, it was said, they did all they could, used everything there was, but still failed to stop the breach. Then five young fellows jumped into the angry waters and threw themselves into the gap, yelling to the others to shovel earth over them —and so the dike was saved!

The villagers built a large temple to these men who had saved their lives and property. It was called Five-dragon Temple. As the years went by, that became the name of the village.

This small village, seemingly so snug in the plain, was exposed to the fury of the elements. And life was so hard that for years there had been very little increase in the population or the number of households.

Each time their houses were washed away by the flood, without waiting for the waters to subside completely the villagers helped each other to bake bricks and tiles, fell timber and saw wood to start rebuilding. Foundations were laid more firmly, walls piled thicker, the new homes made higher than the ones swept away. They built no courtyard walls or outhouses, just single rooms facing south. From a distance the place seemed a cluster of little towers,

for high steps led up to each door and entering a house from the yard was like going upstairs.

Chiu-fen's father-in-law, Kao Ssu-hai, was a man of sixty. They were music-lovers in these parts, and while still in split-bottomed pants he had learned to play the flute, soon becoming an adept. The sound of his flute carried ten *li* or more, and the boatmen who heard it at night as they plied up or down the Huto forgot the hardships and fatigues of their journey. His flute could draw the audience away from an opera. Buddhists or Taoists, who were chanting masses, were reduced by it to abject, crest-fallen silence.

Old Kao was not merely a fine flutist but an enterprising, cheerful character, the organizer of most village activities.

Ten years earlier there had been a peasants' uprising here. It spread from Kaoyang and Lihsien until all the villagers brought out red flags and held meetings in the fields. That was the first appearance, stirring and splendid, of the red flag on this plain!

Kao Ssu-hai, his eighteen-year-old son Ching-shan and Chiu-fen, newly come to their house as a bride of seventeen, all took part in the uprising. Because of his courage, Ching-shan became one of the leaders.

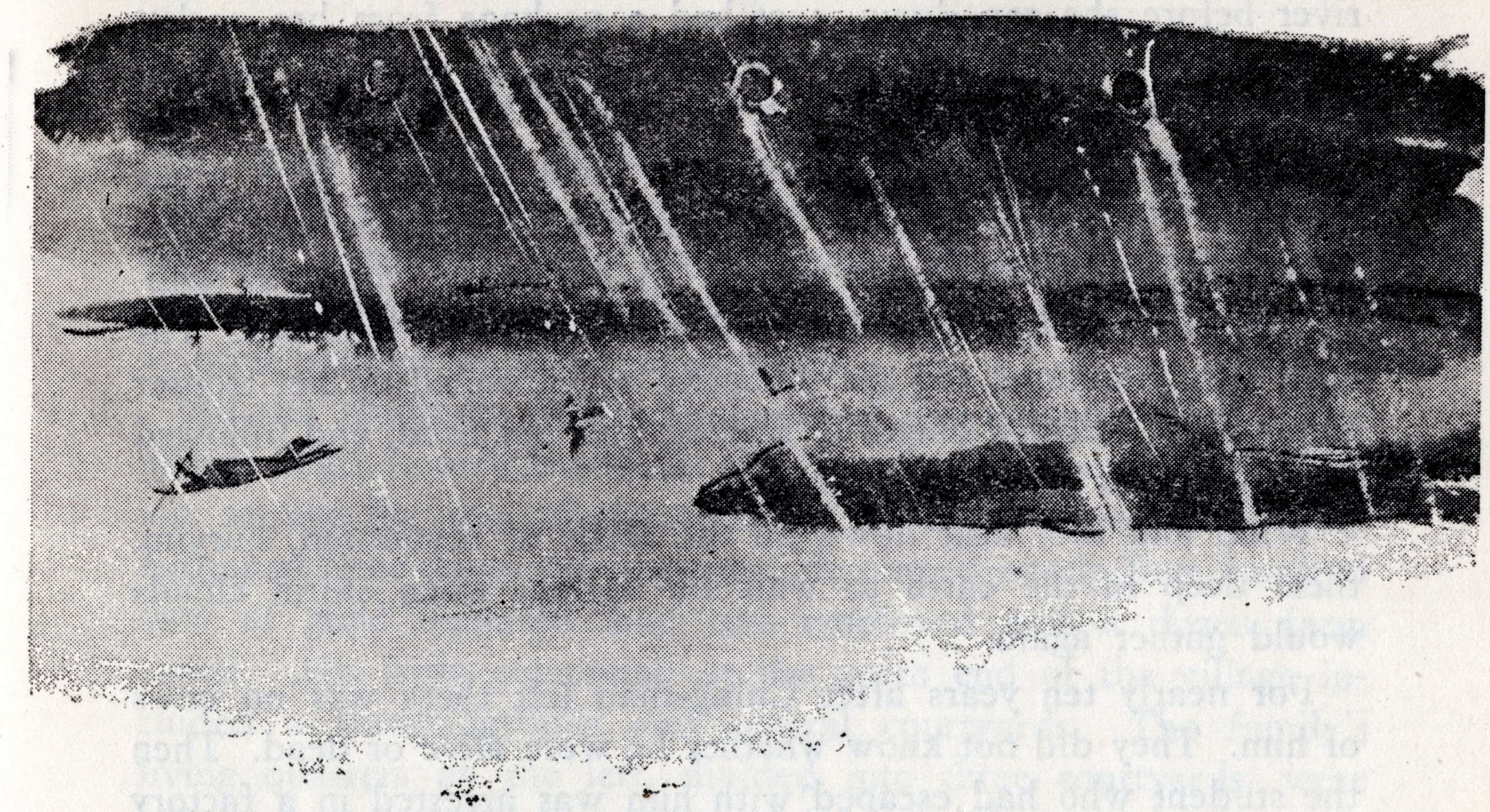
But in no more than a matter of days the uprising was defeated. One sultry day the peasant insurgents were forced back to the dike where, planting their red flag on Five-dragon Temple, they put up a last desperate stand, in the course of which Ching-shan was wounded. That evening Old Kao got a friend to hide his son in the hold of his junk and carry him to safety along with Kao Hsiang, a middle-school student from their village.

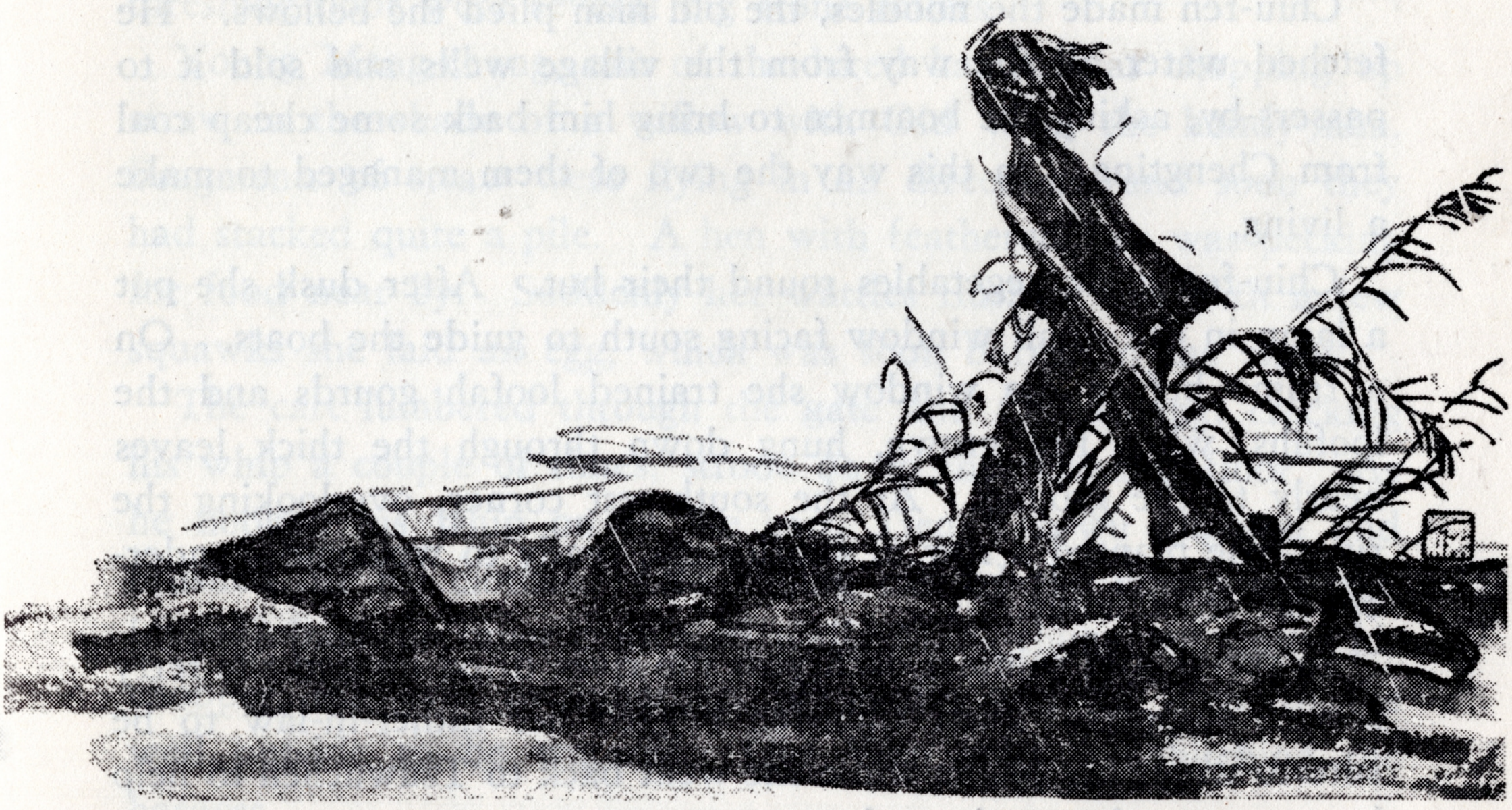
Because of the fighting and confusion, only two people saw Ching-shan off. His father called through the window of the hold:

"So long! Once safely away, you'll manage somehow. Let those devils wait!"

He helped to shove the junk off before going back. He had to assist the peasants who had struggled and lost with them and now must bury their comrades shot down in the fields.

The other person seeing Ching-shan off was his seventeen-year-old wife Chiu-fen. While father and son were talking, she stood a little way up the dike embankment. Black clouds from the western hills had covered half the stars in the sky, and she was almost invisible in the dark. The junk was nosing out into the





river before she ran down, snatched a package from her pocket and tossed it neatly into the hold. Ching-shan picked it up and leaned out of the window to call her name.

Chiu-fen said nothing, just walked level with the junk along the dike. The storm broke. Raindrops as large as copper coins pelted thick and fast on the water. A northwest wind was helping the boat along. Lightning flashed and thunder rumbled. The lurid light illumined the girl distinctly as she rolled up her trouser legs, pulled a ragged length of sacking over her head, and followed the small junk for a good ten *li*.

Wind and rain beat down on the seeds of revolution, burying them deep in the earth to wait for spring, when storm clouds would gather again. . . .

For nearly ten years after Ching-shan left there was no news of him. They did not know whether he were alive or dead. Then the student who had escaped with him was arrested in a factory in Shanghai. On his way to prison in Peking the previous year, he had managed to send word that Ching-shan had gone to Kiangsi.

All the land Old Kao owned was four *mou* on the flats. In a good year this gave him some black soya beans. He built himself a hut on the dike, fixed up an awning before it, and sold tea and noodles by the small ford here.

Chiu-fen made the noodles, the old man plied the bellows. He fetched water all the way from the village wells and sold it to passers-by, asking the boatmen to bring him back some cheap coal from Chengting. In this way the two of them managed to make a living.

Chiu-fen grew vegetables round their hut. After dusk she put a lamp in the small window facing south to guide the boats. On a frame before the window she trained loofah gourds and the loofahs, when full grown, hung down through the thick leaves nearly to the ground. At the southwest corner, overlooking the river, she planted a row of sunflowers, ready to welcome wanderers far from home. . . .

In spring and summer each year the river dried up and the ferry service stopped. Then Chiu-fen begged her father-in-law to be sure to water her plants while she went back to Tzuwuchen to help her younger sister spin and weave.

## 2

Tzuwuchen, just across the river from Five-dragon Temple, was very rarely flooded. Most of the rich loam east and north of the village was given over to irrigated fields which produced at least two and sometimes three crops a year. It was just the reverse of Five-dragon Temple with its sandy, alkaline flats and harvests so often spoiled by flood or drought.

All the landlords in Tzuwuchen had the surname Tien. The village head, known locally as the "boss" or One-eyed Tien, had lost an eye the year of the uprising, when he helped the county militia to hunt down the peasants. He owned nearly four hundred *mou* of good irrigated land and employed half a dozen farm hands. His large compound at the north end of the village included a threshing-floor and several courtyards. The family's living quarters on the left, divided into three courtyards, were hideous excrescences, grey, grouted brick buildings of fairly recent construction. By the threshing-floor on the right were the farm hands' quarters, the stable, mill, pigsty and poultry house. Poplars, weeping willows, peach, apricot and sweet cedrela trees grew inside the mud wall, against which were stacked piles of wheat, millet and sorghum stalks accumulated over the years. Half a dozen large mules were tethered in the shade of the trees, and on the threshing-floor were several big stone rollers.

Young Mang-chung, one of the hired hands, was chopping up straw in the shade of a willow with Old Wen, the handy-man. Fragments of straw were flying in all directions, and soon they had stacked quite a pile. A hen with feathered legs was pecking for food near by. Suddenly her wattles flushed and with a few squawks she laid an egg, which was soon buried in the straw.

The cart lumbered through the gate and Old Chang, cracking his whip a couple of times, strode on to the threshing-floor. As he hooked his whip on to the cart, Tien Yao-wu alighted and brushed off his clothes. Old Chang carried the young master's luggage into the inner courtyard while Mang-chung put down his chopper, ran over to unharness the mules and led them to the well outside to be watered. Old Wen started unhitching the harness.

"Don't put that away!" Mrs. Tien, dressed in white linen, had come out to make sure that nothing had been left on the cart. "Someone will have to fetch Pei-chung back tomorrow. What other daughter-in-law gives herself such airs? She won't come back unless we send to fetch her."

She examined the nesting-boxes at the foot of the east wall and called to Mang-chung, who was leading back the mules:

"I told you to keep an eye on the hens. Where have they laid all their eggs?"

"It's too hot in those boxes," replied the lad promptly. "They look for somewhere cool. There's no keeping track of them."

"Always some excuse, haven't you! I want you to buy some meat now. When you come back you must search till you find all the eggs." With this parting thrust, she went back to the house.

A family reunion! Like a good son, Tien Yao-wu gave his father and mother lengths of contraband Japanese silk bought in Peking. He had other things, too, never seen before in these parts: a thermos flask, electric torch and safety razor. He spread out a whole set of law books on the table, having specialized in law at Chaoyang University in Peking. In his very first year there he started apeing officials, wearing a long gown, short black jacket, silk socks and satin slippers, playing mahjong or bringing prostitutes into the hostel. The eve of his graduation coincided with the Japanese threat to northern China, and the atmosphere in Peking became tense. The December Ninth Movement* made most students more realistic: some did propaganda work among the troops, others went home to the country to organize the peasants. Tien Yao-wu took no interest in such activities, though, devoting all his energy to finding an official position. Failing in this, he had no choice after his graduation but to go home.

His father consoled him, saying:

"If you can land an official job, so much the better. If not, we can afford to keep you at home. I put you through college to

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* This refers to the patriotic demonstration held by students in Peking under the leadership of the Communist Party on December 9, 1935 with the slogans, "End the civil war and unite to resist foreign aggression!" and "Down with Japanese imperialism!" After this, the Anti-Japanese United Front proposed by the Communist Party became the openly advocated policy of all patriotic people.

learn how to draw up petitions and charges. As long as we can hold on to our property, we'll be all right."

That evening saw a small celebration too in the outhouse. Old Chang and Old Wen were sitting on the stable *kang* while Mang-chung lit the paraffin lamp over the manger, brought in fodder and fed the mules.

"Mang-chung!" said Old Chang. "Go and make sure the gate to the inner yard's locked. Then bring us the bottle you'll find in the tool box underneath the cart!"

Dumping the fodder, Mang-chung hurried out to return very soon with a bottle. Having opened it, he tilted back his head and took a good swig before passing the spirits on to Old Wen.

"How does it taste?" asked Old Chang. "That's potent liquor."

"Wait a bit!" said Mang-chung softly. "I'll fix something to go with it."

He grabbed a ladle used for mixing mash, washed it in the water bucket and emptied into it the dark oil from the cart's two lamps. Then he rummaged in the straw for some eggs, and fried them on the stove for heating the *kang*. Last of all he broke up some stalks to serve as chopsticks.

"You drink a lot for a young 'un!" remarked Old Chang. "Don't overdo it!"

But each time the bottle came round to him, Mang-chung did it full justice. Before very long he flopped down on the *kang*.

"What a lad!" Old Chang sighed.

"Are things lively in Paoting now, Brother Chang?" asked Old Wen. "The place is seething. People are worried."

"Looks as if we'll have to fight the Japanese, does it?"

"The station is full of army officers, all seeing off their families to the south!"

"So they don't mean to fight!" Old Wen pulled a long face. "How far have the Japanese forces got? Are they heading this way? What does the young master say?"

"What does he know?" Old Chang laughed. "He spent his night in Paoting at a bawdy-house."

"What a thing to do!" Mang-chung sat up abruptly. "Pei-chung's been waiting for him for six months. Can't he wait till he gets home?"

"So now you sit up and take an interest, eh?" said Old Wen sarcastically.

"Seems to me young Mr. Tien will never amount to much." Once more Old Chang sighed. "He's been through university but he talks less sensibly than his wife. Here they've all been working themselves to the bone to feed such a useless clod."

"Working themselves to the bone? Not them!" scoffed Old Wen. "They've cartfuls of grain in the fields, piles of interest on the money they've invested in shops, not to mention an oil press and a cotton gin. Enough for him to fritter away! It's easy come, easy go for the likes of them. But we people and the poor devils pressing oil and ginning cotton for them have to sweat it out from one end of the year to another. Look at him!" Old Wen laid a hand on Mang-chung's head. "He's never even been to primary school, let alone university."

Mang-chung patted the old fellow on the back.

"And Elder Brother Wen here is getting on for fifty, but has he ever married?"

"Let me ask you a riddle, Mang-chung!" said Old Wen with a chuckle. "A fish bone between a pair of chopsticks — what's that?"

"Search me!"

"Two old bachelors and a young one! We ought to call this shack of ours 'Bachelors' Hall.' Or put up a placard saying, 'The Last of Their Line'! Well, enough of that. Time to sleep now!" He swung his legs off the *kang*.

Mang-chung slept out of doors on the threshing-floor on a mat used to cover firewood. The night was fine with a breeze from the northwest, and there were no mosquitoes. The Milky Way slanted over the lad's head and in the utter silence his thoughts wandered.

He was at the age for day-dreams. Just turned eighteen, he had worked six years for the landlord. It was Chun-erh's father Wu Ta-yin, then overseer on the farm, who had got him the job. But during the autumn harvest One-eyed Tien flew into a rage because Wu gave the young hands an extra meal of thin gruel. He kept twitting him with having a communist son-in-law, until Wu Ta-yin quit in disgust and set off in a tattered gown for the northeast. Before leaving he entrusted his daughters to Old Kao's care and Mang-chung to his workmate Old Chang. He told the

girls to do Mang-chung's sewing and mending and make shoes and socks for him. The boy, for his part, rose early and slept late so as to have time to fetch water and do other heavy work for the two sisters.

If a poor country lad helps a girl with her work and she takes an interest in his food and clothing, they are likely to fall in love.

Today, when Mang-chung took his mules out to be watered, Chun-erh was bending over her distaff on the dike, swaying lightly as she spun. He stood staring till one of his mules upset the empty bucket with a clatter and it nearly fell into the well. At that Chun-erh looked round and laughed.

Now Mang-chung scanned the Milky Way for the Weaving Maid.* Then he located the halter thrown down beside her by her Cowherd husband, and the shuttle she had tossed to him. In fancy he could see the Cowherd rushing frantically along the Milky Way, terrified that she might escape him. Would he, Mang-chung, ever save up enough to get married and hire a sedan-chair to fetch his bride home, he wondered? Would he ever have two or three *mou* of land or a little house of his own?

Late in the night, dew fell. It fell on the sorghum thrusting up in the fields, on the russet dates splitting open as they ripened on the wall, on the spacious threshing-floor, on sturdy young Mang-chung and the stone roller beside him.

At that hour Chun-erh was sound asleep on her *kang*, unaware that a young man was thinking about her. She did not hear her sister tossing and turning or murmuring endearments in her dreams. A green grasshopper on the trellis outside the window drank its fill of dew and set up a joyful shrilling. The gourds heavy with moisture drooped, and dew-drops rolled down the tender down on their skins. A large white flower on a long stem was reaching up from the trellis to the sky. Chirping away, the grasshopper crawled slowly up it.



In spite of his assurances, One-eyed Tien now started pulling strings for his son. He was connected with Commissioner Chang

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* The Weaving Maid and the Cowherd are the names given by the Chinese people to two constellations separated by the Milky Way.

Yin-wu of Poyeh and Yangtsun, to whom he sent Yao-wu with a letter. Chang Yin-wu was in charge of several adjoining counties, responsible for organizing militia and "electing" district heads. He told Tien Yao-wu to go home and help in his own district.

One-eyed Tien's next move was to invite all the village heads and deputy heads of their district to a banquet. At the height of the feasting, his son's visiting cards were passed round and Tien Yao-wu offered a toast. Then his father made clear the reason for this invitation.

"Brothers, I want you to do what you can for your nephew!"

The guests, mostly counterparts of their host, replied:

"That goes without saying! On one understanding: When Tien Yao-wu is district head he must do what he can for us."

"Of course," agreed One-eyed Tien. "You may be sure he'll keep your interests at heart in all matters, large and small. Commissioner Chang says the Japanese troops may be here any day. There's nothing any of us can do about that. If all the soldiers the government's been feeding can't stop them, what can we civilians do? But we must be on our guard. Because when that time comes there's bound to be trouble here, and we may take a beating —it won't be the first. With Yao-wu in the district office, things won't be so bad. Commissioner Chang wants to organize militia too. The order will soon be coming down for the well-to-do families in each village to buy guns and supply men. This is like playing with fire! Without a reliable man in the district office, we'd find ourselves in plenty of trouble."

"This drought has spoiled the harvest. Where's the money for guns to come from?" The village heads were worried. "Even a gun made in Hupeh costs between seventy and eighty silver dollars."

"Well, it can't be helped. Those are the commissioner's orders. But that needn't worry us. When you get back to your villages, do your best. Make those who are flush fork out, and divide the remaining cost between the small fry. One thing, though: The people must pay, but once the guns are bought they must stay in our hands!"

So the feast ended, all the village heads and their deputies having promised to vote for Yao-wu as district head.

It was very close. After seeing off his guests, One-eyed Tien had a wicker couch put in the porch and flopped down on it to cool off.

East of the village lived a certain Old Chiang who had never done an honest stroke of work in his life, but lived on the scraps he picked up from rich men's tables. Other people's misfortunes were meat and drink to him, for a murder in the village, a trial on a capital charge, a fire or the ceremonies to invoke rain, always meant some pickings for Old Chiang. Now that the weather was so dry, some peasants could always be found at dawn and dusk staring up from the dike at the clouds and wondering when it would rain. Old Chiang would accost them, saying:

"Old Man Heaven is waiting for Tzuwuchen to put on a fine show!"

Few made any reply. They knew well enough that no amount of rain now could save the harvest. Nor could they afford the cost of putting on an opera to beg for rain.

Old Chiang was feeling at a loss what to do when Tien's guests started leaving. At once he slipped in, flourishing his fan, and padded softly over to One-eyed Tien.

"Heaven must be blind, I swear!" he exclaimed. "He won't send a shower of rain to cool you off in this confounded heat!"

Tien did not raise his eyes, simply wagged the slipper dangling from his big toe.

"Get out!" he growled, half angry, half amused. "Have you come to lap up the dregs of my wine again?"

"Seems to me you've no idea how to live," said Old Chiang. "In the big cities they have electric fans. Why not get Yao-wu

to buy you one? We could stand beside you and enjoy the breeze."

When One-eyed Tien made no reply, Old Chiang started fanning him.

"All right," declared the landlord, sitting up. "Go and fetch my steward. The two of you can eat what's left of the feast."

Old Chiang lost no time in calling the steward, and the landlord told them his plan for raising funds to buy guns.

The steward and Old Chiang, one with a large abacus and the other with a wallet, started their collection from the west end of the village at Chun-erh's cottage.

Chiu-fen and Chun-erh were just wondering where their padded clothes for that winter were to come from. They rose every day at cock-crow to spin while the moon was still in the sky. In the heat of the day they moved into the shade, spinning for all they were worth, determined to have all their yarn spun by the next fair. When they heard of this new levy, Chiu-fen exclaimed:

"The crop's failed. We've no money to pay the usual levies! How can you ask for all these extras?"

"That's a wicked way to talk!" replied Old Chiang. "Our village will have quite a decent harvest."

"Who in our village?" demanded Chiu-fen.

"If One-eyed Tien doesn't get eight pecks a *mou,* you can cut off my head!"

"He doesn't count!" retorted Chun-erh. "He's got those big water wheels. But we poor folk—don't talk about eight pecks—you can cut off my head if we get as much as eight pints!"

"How much land have you, may I ask?" sneered Old Chiang.

"He's the one with all the land, let him pay the whole lot!"

"Why should he bear the brunt?"

"If he won't bear the brunt, neither will we!"

"This concerns the whole village," persisted Old Chiang. "I'm not going to waste my breath arguing with you. If you refuse to pay, you'll have to give your reason to the public."

"Call yourself the public?" Chun-erh snorted. "Grubs from the same cesspool, more like! Apes from the same valley!"

"You watch your tongue, my girl!" warned the steward. "This fund's for buying guns to fight the Japanese. Once they get here,

they'll make five households share one chopper and forbid you to bolt your door at night — would you like that?"

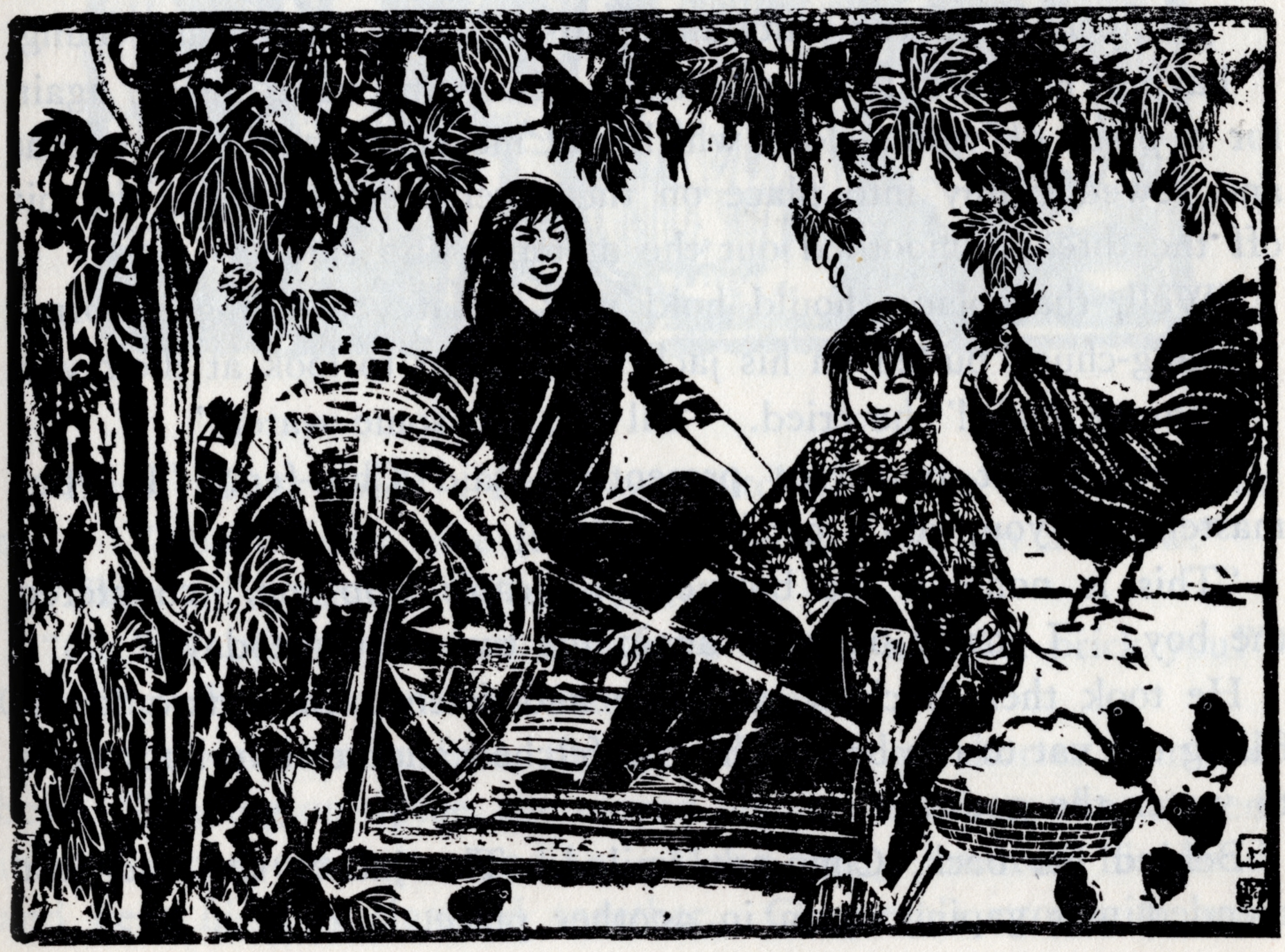
"To fight the Japanese I'll pay!" Chun-erh drew some notes from her pocket. "This is what I got for my cloth at the last fair. For one *mou* and a half, seventy-two cents and a half — there!" She handed Old Chiang the money.

"What a tongue that little bitch has!" grumbled Old Chiang as he and the steward moved on.

Since guns and bullets were said to be cheaper in the hills, Old Chiang wrote a letter to one of his dubious friends there and One-eyed Tien told Mang-chung to go and see about purchasing the weapons. It was over a hundred *li* to the western hills, and the journey both ways would take two days and a night. But the boy was strong and could rough it.

It was seldom that Mang-chung had a chance like this. As soon as he received his orders, he put on a tattered straw hat and set out with nothing but two flapjacks to eat on the way.

The sun had already risen and peasants with hoes on their shoulders were heading for the fields. At the outskirts of the



village, Mang-chung looked through Chun-erh's wicker gate and saw her and her sister fastening the warp threads on a loom set under the gourd trellis. Chun-erh, holding a hank of yarn, had fixed up half the warp. Mang-chung's jacket was torn — a good excuse to go in. At the sound of his step, Chun-erh faced him without a word. Chiu-fen looked up to ask:

"Aren't you working yet, after sunrise?"

"Do me a favour!" He grinned. "Mend this jacket for me." He put down his flapjacks and took off his jacket.

"What's the big hurry?" asked Chun-erh, stopping work.

"I'm taking a letter to the hills."

"Trust them to send *you* on an errand like that!"

"I eat his rice, I have to carry out orders." Mang-chung hung his head.

"Chun-erh will mend it for you," said Chiu-fen. "She's got her thimble on."

Chun-erh went inside to rummage in her work-basket and came out with a needle stuck into the breast of her jacket, the long strand of white cotton threaded through it reaching nearly to the ground. Taking the jacket she exclaimed:

"It's so far gone, what it really needs is a patch."

"Just cobble up the rents and that will do," said Mang-chung.

Paying not the least attention, Chun-erh went inside again for a piece of white cloth which she measured against the rent and sewed firmly into place on the reverse side. Then she bit off the thread, smoothed out the material and said:

"Well, that place should hold now, whatever else gets torn."

Mang-chung pulled on his jacket and went to look at their vat.

"Empty again!" he cried. "I'll get you some water."

"We'll do it ourselves presently," said Chiu-fen. "If your master sees you, you'll catch it."

"This is none of his business, he can't stop me," countered the boy. "I shan't be back again for two or three days."

He took their buckets and pole and fetched them two loads, filling the vat to the brim. Then he fetched another two bucketfuls to water the gourds.

Behind his back, Chun-erh smiled. The jacket she had just mended was gaping again in another place.

"Here! That needs a few more stitches." She beckoned him over. "You needn't take it off. You can chew on a straw."

"Chew on a straw? Whatever for?"

"Go on! Otherwise we may have words, and I'll prick you!" Giggling, she stuck a straw into his mouth.

They stood face to face, the girl half a head shorter than the boy. Standing on tiptoe, she moved his arm to where she wanted it and set about her mending. Mang-chung lowered his head and kept his lips clamped together. Chun-erh's proximity and

her warm scent set his blood racing, made his breath come faster. And when she met his eyes, a wave of colour swept over her neck and cheeks, suffusing her whole face. Hastily making a knot, she broke off the thread then turned away, telling him over her shoulder:

"You must make do with that for a couple of days. When our weaving's finished, I'll make you a new jacket."

## 4

Mang-chung picked up his flapjacks and bounded off down the dike. Never before had the birds in the Tzuwuchen willows sung so sweetly. A breeze blew over his shoulder, he felt as if on wings. He overtook an ox cart taking a young wife to visit relatives, then passed a hawker carrying a great load of musk melons to the fair. He outdistanced everybody going his way. Some wheat had been knocked down by the side of the road. "Fine big ears, it's too bad to let them be spoiled," he thought, and propped the plants up again. There was a large pot-hole in the rutted road where a cart might easily upset, and he filled it in. On the slope leading up to a village an old man was sweating and straining behind a barrow of grain, which kept sliding back till Mang-chung lent a helping hand. In the village he found a child who had fallen down. He picked it up and comforted the toddler, then told it to run home to its mother.

That evening he crossed the Peking-Hankow Railway. He saw grey water-towers and red and green lights at the station and heard the whistle of engines. Coach after coach of soldiers and horses were rolling south. On the roofs, stacked with baggage, there huddled women and children.

Now he struck into the mountains up a stone path, climbing one hill after another. Each time he asked the way of a country-man, he was directed to the hill in front. "Just keep going that way. Straight ahead!"

Summers here were short. The grass on the south side of the hills was green, but on the north it was silvered over with frost. Dates were spread out on white roof tops, black goats were leaping from one rock to another. There were many wayside

springs whose slow upwelling of water reminded him of a crab blowing bubbles. Never had Mang-chung tasted such pure water. He kept kneeling down to cup his hands and drink.

He forged ahead, kicking up pebbles, till the soles of his shoes were in holes and pebbles got in. "I'll have to ask Chun-erh's help again when I get back!" he thought. He picked up some smooth purple stones and slipped them into his pocket, for these were treasures to children on the plain, who occasionally found one in the fields and maintained that it was dropped by a crow carrying it back from the hills to serve as its pillow. He would give these stones to the little girls for their games.

At noon he reached Chengnanchuang, a sizable market. Under a clump of willows on the river bank a middle-aged woman was sitting making cloth shoes by a barrow of dates and beancurd. Mang-chung sat down on a rock and took off his shoes.

The large stream in front was called the River of Rouge. Sunlight glinted on clear water as it rippled over the red sandstone bed. From the opposite bank sounded singing and cheerful shouting.

Presently troops rounded the hill, not in formation but in twos and threes. They wore broad-brimmed straw hats and had shabby padded jackets over their shoulders. Coming to the river, they took off their shoes and rolled up their trouser legs to wade swiftly across, talking and laughing together. They stopped to rest under the willows.

"What troops are those, sister?" Mang-chung asked the woman.

"Red Army men!" she told him. "One lot passed through here a few days ago. They don't look much, but they can fight! I've heard they fought their way up here from Kiangsi. Over twenty thousand *li*."

"From Kiangsi, eh?" said Mang-chung. "Any men from these parts among them?"

"Not that I've seen," she answered. "They talk with an outlandish accent. But they don't try to cheat you. They're good to us ordinary folk."

"The troops on the train were going south. Why are these marching north?"

"They're two different sorts of soldiers, that's why. The ones going south are Chiang Kai-shek's men. They feed on the people's grain but don't fight, and are good for nothing but bullying

honest people. These soldiers are really out to fight the Japanese. Just listen to what they're singing."

Mang-chung listened and heard a song calling on the people to get organized and resist the invaders. The Red Army men had scattered, some to sleep in the shade of the trees, others to wash their faces in the stream. A dark, gaunt man walked up to Mang-chung and asked:

"Where are you from, young fellow? You don't look like one of the hill people."

"I'm from the plain," said Mang-chung. "Shentse County."

"Shentse?" The soldier's face lit up and he went on in the local dialect, "Which village in Shentse?"

"Tzuwuchen. You speak like a man from hereabouts, sergeant."

"Come on, we two must have a talk." The soldier led Mang-chung under a nearby tree and rolled a cigarette for each of them.

"Let me ask you something." He eyed Mang-chung eagerly. "Do you know a man called Wu Ta-yin in your village?"

"I should say I do! We used to work for the same boss. In fact, he found me that job. But he's left home now and is growing vegetables in Mutanchiang."

"He has a daughter. . . ."

"Two daughters, Chiu-fen and Chun-erh," Mang-chung put in. "Which village are *you* from? Do you know Kao Ching-shan?"

The Red Army man's eyes shone but he paused before answering:

"I know him. Are his folk alive and well?"

"They certainly are! Times are hard, of course, but they manage. They're just longing for Ching-shan to come back. Have you any news of him?"

"He may be coming this way." The soldier smiled. "I wouldn't be surprised if he went home for a look."

"That would be grand," cried Mang-chung. "Chiu-fen's eating her heart out for him. If you see him, be sure to tell him to go home and see them."

"Where are you off to now?"

"I'm delivering a message for my boss."

"What's his name?"

"One-eyed Tien."

"Who's he?"

"The landlord at the north end of our village. That year of the uprising the Red Army shot him in the eye."

"Him!" The soldier's eyes glinted coldly and his thick eyebrows contracted. "What's become of those who took part in the uprising?"

"Some are dead, some have left home."

"How's the people's morale?"

"What's that?"

"Are they keen to resist Japan?"

"I'll say they are! I'm on my way to buy guns so that we can train to fight the Japanese."

"Who's taking the lead in this?"

"One-eyed Tien."

"Bah!" growled the soldier. "He won't use the weapons against the Japanese. You must get organized and take over the guns yourselves."

He explained to Mang-chung the need to resist Japan. But it was late, the boy had to be going on, and the soldier saw him on his way. As they parted, Mang-chung asked:

"Will you honestly be seeing Ching-shan, comrade?"

"Yes. You tell his folk not to worry. He's doing fine. He'll surely be over to see them before long." With that, he lowered his head and turned away.

Mang-chung went on more cheerfully than ever now that he had reliable news of Ching-shan. How pleased this was going to make the two sisters! He delivered the letter, transacted his business, and started quickly home the next day. But the troops had already left the River of Rouge. The woman selling beancurd told him they had marched north the previous night.

Back in Tzuwuchen, Mang-chung found Chiu-fen and Chun-erh finishing off a length of cloth. From a distance he started grinning. Striding up to them, he said softly:

"Sister Chiu-fen, come on inside! I've news for you."

"What's the mystery now?" Chun-erh looked up.

"Come on in, both of you!" He strode to their cottage. There, sitting on the edge of the *kang*, he told them:

"I've grand news! Brother Ching-shan will soon be home."

Chiu-fen in the doorway bombarded him with questions. Mang-chung had to tell his story again and again. When finally he

had given a detailed description of the Red Army man's appearance and way of talking, Chiu-fen burst into tears!

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Mang-chung in dismay.

"It was him you saw, I'm sure!" sobbed Chiu-fen. "Has he no heart, to hide the truth from one of his own folk?"

Chun-erh, who had brought in an armful of yarn, started scolding Mang-chung too.

"Hadn't you enough sense to question him properly? What were his clothes like?"

"Very old and patched."

"And his shoes and socks?"

"He wasn't wearing socks. And I wouldn't call those shoes either—just a few rags bound together." He gestured to show what he meant.

"Why ask such questions?" demanded Chiu-fen. "I'm sure it was him. Who else would know so much about us?"

"Did he have a beard?" persisted Chun-erh.

"Hair all over his face," replied Mang-chung.

"Doesn't sound like him," said Chun-erh.

"He's been away for ten years, why shouldn't he grow a beard?" retorted Chiu-fen, laughing. Too excited to keep still, she set off for Five-dragon Temple. Chun-erh watched her with a smile. Her sister's step was as light as if she had just got over a serious illness.

## 5

Back in Five-dragon Temple, Chiu-fen told her father-in-law Mang-chung's news coupled with her own reading of it.

"It must have been him," agreed Old Kao. "He couldn't speak openly because these parts are still under the same old gang."

He threw a jacket over his shoulders and picked up his pipe.

"You stay and keep an eye on things here while I take a turn in the village."

"Don't tell anyone!" she cautioned him. "Wait till he's really back!"

"I know. What do you take me for, a fool? I'm only going to tell a few close friends, folk we can trust. After all, they think as much of Ching-shan as we do!"

He was still not back by nightfall, when Chiu-fen locked the door and went to the village herself.

She called at the home of Kao Hsiang, who had run away at the same time as Ching-shan and was now in prison in Peking. The household consisted of Kao Hsiang's father and mother, a wife about Chiu-fen's age, and a little girl. Chiu-fen often dropped in to chat with Kao Hsiang's wife. They did not see eye to eye on everything, for young Mrs. Kao had been rather spoiled as a child and, much as she loved her husband, she could not understand him and thought his conduct foolish. Because his family was fairly well-to-do, she had not supported the uprising but been badly frightened by it. Still, she always enjoyed a talk with Chiu-fen and would say, "Chiu-fen, we're in the same boat. . . . I'm even worse off than you!" For at that time there was simply no word from Ching-shan while Kao Hsiang was in prison as a Communist and that, as even his small daughter knew, meant he might lose his head.

Kao Hsiang's parents had travelled up to Peking to see him, but when his wife wanted to take the child to the prison the old folk said he was against it. Instead they told her to make him a padded gown. It had to be cut to fit over the chains round his waist, with a curious bulge in the middle like the gown of a child unable to fasten a belt. Since she could not bear to work on it for long at a stretch, it took her several nights to finish. At each stitch she let fall a tear, till the cotton was soaked.

They had been a loving couple from the day of their wedding. When Kao Hsiang escorted her on her first visit home and they crossed the Huto which was swollen in summer, the rocking of the ferry-boat made the timid young bride feel faint. Then in front of everyone her husband put his arm round her and covered her eyes. The villagers with their feudal ideas had a good laugh at that and the story spread far and wide.

Recalling the past only made Kao Hsiang's wife more wretched. She had never smiled again since her husband's imprisonment, never worn any gay new clothes. The family hung up no red

lanterns at New Year, bought no moon cakes at the Mid-autumn Festival. When night fell they closed their door and went to bed.

This evening Chiu-fen reached their house just as lamps were being lit in the village. She saw light through the window paper and for the first time in ten years heard Kao Hsiang's wife laughing!

She found the family seated round the table so absorbed in a letter that her entry went unnoticed.

"What are you all so pleased about?" she asked.

"We've had good news!"

"My dad's out of prison!" cried the girl, who was leaning over the table.

"Yours is a dad in a thousand!" Her mother patted her, and told Chiu-fen, "Kao Hsiang's come out! He asks after you all in his letter. You've arrived just at the right time. Sit down, quick, and listen!"

So Chiu-fen had to keep back her own good news and sit down on the *kang* to hear theirs.

The letter had in fact been read out earlier that day, but after supper the little girl begged her grandfather to read it out again. He spread it flat on the table while he polished his glasses, then picked up the letter and held it this way and that as if to find the best light. These preliminaries lasted so long that his wife, sitting by the quilts on the *kang,* lost patience.

"You're slower, I do declare, than an actor dressing up!"

"If you're so smart, you take over!" He put the letter down on the table again, took off his glasses and weighed them in his hand. "Can't you see I'm old and my eyes are failing, woman? And your son's writing is mighty hard to read. I can't abide these new-fangled fountain pens."

"All right! Get a move on! Read!" His wife shut her eyes to listen. The child strained forward, tugging at her ears.

Although Kao Hsiang's letter was addressed to his parents, even his ten-year-old daughter, not to say Chiu-fen, could tell that many passages were meant for her mother. As her grandfather read, she saw her mother's face turn a deeper and deeper crimson.

The letter said:

"After my release I came straight to Yenan. Now I'm studying in Wayaopao under the direction of Chairman Mao himself! Soon we shall be marching north to resist Japan. This makes up for all my wanderings and troubles of the last ten years!"

His father broke off at this point to say:

"Yenan. That's a familiar name. In the novel *Heroes of the Marshlands* Instructor Wang goes to Yenan. I can't just rightly remember where it is. Go and get me a map from his case."

Kao Hsiang's wife promptly fetched and opened her husband's dusty case of books which had not been touched for years. After hunting in it for a while, she passed a book to her father-in-law, who said:

"This is a dictionary. Let *me* have a look."

He found his son's old geography book and pored over the map of China. After quite a search he located the name Yenan in brackets under Fushih County in the province of Shensi. Measuring the distance with two fingers, he declared:

"Look, here's Shentse where we are, and here's Yenan where Kao Hsiang and his friends are. Only about an inch apart, but to cover that distance on foot would take some days!"

Kao Hsiang's mother sighed.

"Ten years he's been away, keeping us on pins and needles all the time. When at last they let him go, why didn't he come home to see his mother before running off like this to the back of beyond?"

"You're a foolish old woman," said her husband. "There's someone there your son cares for more, that's why!"

The letter mentioned Ching-shan and the likelihood that he had joined the Long March and had come north from Kiangsi to resist Japan. At this, Chiu-fen told them the news Mang-chung had brought and they shared in her happiness. The old man put the letter back in its envelope and gave it to his daughter-in-law. Handling it as if it were gold or jade, Kao Hsiang's wife passed it to old Mrs. Kao, who tucked it carefully under the pile of quilts.

Cupping her chin in her hands, the little girl looked at her mother and asked:

"Mum, let's go and find my dad!"

"You're ready to leave home?" her mother asked.

"Of course I am! Will you come too? If you won't, I'll go alone."

"You go alone!" Her mother laughed.

If only she could send the child to her husband! It would be like making a coat, with her child as the needle to carry the long thread from her mother's heart to him, binding them together; or like a canal bearing water from one pool to the next, a small bird flitting from bough to bough, from one tree to another. . . .

That night at least two women in the little village of Five-dragon Temple were too excited to sleep.

It was oppressively hot. Old Kao was not yet back when Chiu-fen reached home. As soon as she lit the paraffin lamp, insects flew in through the window to flutter round it. The *kang* was so hot that she picked up a tattered rush fan and stepped out on to the dike. The sunflowers shedding golden pollen in the dark were giving off a cloying scent. A speck of light was approaching from the village; she recognized the sparks of Old Kao's pipe.

After supper Chun-erh had come to find her sister. She was pleased for Chiu-fen's sake and looking forward herself to Ching-shan's return. As Chiu-fen was out she went back, crossing the river under a pitch black sky. Then the moon came up, turning both banks white and disclosing the upturned ferry-boat, grounded and waiting for the river's embrace in autumn.

Now she had to cross a white sand dune and clump of willows.

Smooth, lissom willow branches stroked her hands and face, while a grasshopper that had just cast its skin set up a cheerful din. Chun-erh stopped and, gently parting the willow branches, tiptoed forward to catch the grasshopper.

Suddenly a black figure jumped up from the ground at her feet. The girl gave a cry.

It was Mang-chung. Chuckling, he said:

"After supper I fed the cattle and washed my feet by the well in the kitchen garden. From there I saw something white flitting through the willows. I thought it was a big bird come here to roost. When I slipped out to catch it, I found it was your white jacket!"

"After scaring me stiff, you spin a yarn like that!"

"All right, so I came to meet you. Is Uncle Ssu-hai pleased?"

"Who wouldn't be pleased when his son's coming back? Tomorrow he may treat you!"

"Treat me to what?"

"To a big bowl of noodles with all the trimmings." She smiled. "You've gone and frightened my grasshopper away. Let's go home."

"What's the rush? Let's stay and have a little fun here."

"What fun? This place gives me the creeps." Chun-erh started off.

"Wait for me!" called Mang-chung softly. "Wait while I catch that grasshopper. It's chirping again." He slipped in between the willows, following the sound, and Chun-erh tagged at his heels.

Suddenly he gripped her hand. With a choking feeling she pulled away, lost her balance and fell down.

The willows above made a thick canopy. Late as it was, the sandy soil was soft and warm after a day of fierce sun. Ant-hills sprinkled the ground and brown ants were still milling around in the dark. One crawled up Chun-erh's flushed, moist cheek.

Unaccountably, the girl burst into tears.

"What are we doing here?" she asked. "If you've something to say, go on and say it!"

"They're all tickled pink because Ching-shan's coming back. Tell me, why shouldn't the two of us get married?"

Chun-erh hung her head and scooped up a handful of sand. The damp earth below felt cool to her burning fingers.

"It's no use," she answered at last. "You couldn't keep me."

"But if Ching-shan comes back? And if I get a chance to make good?"

"I only hope you will!" she assured him. "But I'm not an old woman yet. What's all the hurry?"

## 6

When Chun-erh reached home the courtyard was flooded with moonlight. She opened the door, went in and sat on the *kang*, staring dreamily out of the window. . . . Her white jacket, wet through, smelled of soil and the crushed grass under the willows.

Moonlight streaming in through the vine leaves and lattice window fell on her firmly rounded, youthful breasts.

Her heart was beating fast. She felt rather frightened, rather dissatisfied too. She pricked up her ears. The wind was rising out there in the fields.

She went out. Black clouds were gathering swiftly in the northwest. Soon all stars and trees there were blotted out from sight. Mist veiled the parched fields. Crops, trees, grass and flowers were trembling, as if in joyful anticipation of a storm.

At midnight the storm broke. Torrential rain merged earth and sky in one. A faint roar like the bellowing of an old bull sounded in the distance upstream.

Mang-chung had not repaired their roof this year and it started leaking. Water came dripping through a dozen cracks. Chun-erh put all her bowls and basins on the *kang* to keep it dry and, holding the lid of a pan over her head, paced up and down the room.

Hundreds of frogs seemed to have sprung up from nowhere. The din of their chorus of croaking was enough to split the sky. Chun-erh was a little afraid, all on her own, but she ran out through the pelting rain to the dike. All around was a swirl of white. A hare dashed wildly on to the embankment, turned a somersault at her feet and streaked towards the village.

"The river will soon be in spate!" she thought, hurrying back.

The next day the weather cleared and the flood swept down, breaching the north side of the dike and surrounding Tzuwuchen. Day and night, sounding gongs and drums, the villagers mounted guard over the dike. They heard a distant rumbling, but did not learn till later that Japanese troops had occupied Paoting. Water could not stop the homeless refugees from coming over like swarm after swarm of locusts. Every day after their meals, the people of Tzuwuchen gathered on the embankment to watch the pitiful sight.

Some of the refugees came from nearby Paoting or Kaoyang, others all the way from the northeast. You could gauge the distance and the time spent on the road from their faces, foot-gear and the possessions they carried, which dwindled from day to day. Those from far away had blistered feet swollen from immersion in the muddy water. Sounding the water with a green

stalk of sorghum, they made their way slowly and painfully towards the dike. Their haggard faces were blackened by the sun, sorghum flowers sprinkled their hair, and because their strength was spent they had to ask watchers on the dike to help them up.

One young woman with a baby on her back was leading a child who kept slipping and falling in the turgid water. When at last they reached the embankment, she appealed to Chun-erh:

"Will you help my kiddy up, lass?"

When she had pulled them all up, they sat down on the dike and a group of women flocked round. Chun-erh ran home to fetch some steamed bread for the children.

"Thank you, lass!" cried the woman. "We had a home of our own and a trade too. But now the Japanese have taken over there."

"Where are you from?" asked Chun-erh.

"The northeast. We thought this side of the Great Wall we'd be all right. But the Japanese have raced us here! They push on faster than we can run away. Heaven knows if we'll ever reach a place of safety!"

"Have you no husband?" asked Chun-erh.

"It was too much for him—he died near Peking. . . ." She wiped her eyes.

"How far have the Japanese got now?" asked another woman.

"There's no telling!" was the reply. "Yesterday when we stopped for the night there, Kaoyang was just as quiet as you are here. But when we got up this morning the people of Kaoyang started running too."

This news was received in silence. After nursing her baby, the woman limped off down the dike with the other refugees.

The day was clear and bright. The flood lapped round the village and flowed east. The peasants, knee-deep in water, reaped the crops which had ripened and piled them on the dike or spread them out over the roof tops to dry.

A drone like that of a gad-fly was heard in the sky. As it grew in volume, they saw something like a hawk. Drawing nearer, this proved to be planes flying in formation towards the village.

"Look!" The peasants pointed upwards. "Three airships! No, five of 'em!"

For them this was a rare sight. Those indoors rushed out into the yard, those in the yard climbed the roof. Bands of children scampered along the dike, clapping their hands.

One of the refugees called over her shoulder:

"Don't stand there watching, folks! Take cover! Those Japanese planes are coming to bomb you!"

No one paid the least attention. Some women urged others to put down their sewing and come out.

"Hurry! Hurry! They'll soon have passed!"

But instead of passing, the planes circled overhead.

"Like hens with wings!" cried one woman. "Looking for somewhere to lay their eggs."

Crash! Not till the planes started strafing did the villagers scatter in confusion or fall flat. Two were killed on the dike. A mule was blown to pieces.

Following the curve of the bay, the planes kept up their strafing. A boatload of refugees was crossing the river. The water was so high, the current so strong, that when the passengers panicked the ferry-boat overturned, plunging old and young into the swirling waves. They rose to the surface, screaming for help, then sank. . . .

The planes went on strafing and bombing, raising blood-red jets of water.

All the swimmers in Five-dragon Temple jumped into the river to save the refugees. Old Kao tore off his clothes and struck out through the waves to rescue a baby who was being swept downstream. Swimming over a *li* in one spurt, he caught the child by the leg and carried him ashore. Walking through the dripping refugees who had been rescued, he shouted:

"Where's this boy's mother? Whose is this child?"

"Put some clothes on, grandad!" someone urged him. "Here's nothing but women."

"To hell with it!" swore Old Kao. "Is this a time to be nice? Go and preach to the Japanese!"

Unable to find the boy's mother, he laid the child face down on the dike and jumped into the water again. He made a point of rescuing women, and to each of them he said:

"Don't cry! Hurry up and cough up that water you've swallowed. I've saved your little boy for you."

When the woman shook her head at sight of the child, he jumped into the river again.

So it went on till dusk, by which time the flood had claimed a great many victims. When bonfires had been lit to dry the survivors, Old Kao put on his clothes and made another search for the little boy's mother. Told that she was the dark young woman from the northeast, who had been wounded and drowned with her elder boy, Old Kao called Chiu-fen over.

"Take this baby to someone who has milk," he said. "His own mother's dead, so we'll keep him."

"Keep a baby, in times like these!"

"If you won't take him, I will!" Hot tears welled up in his eyes. "Times like these, indeed! Don't talk rubbish!"

That night, the refugees slept sprawled out by the embers of the bonfires. The river ran fast and savagely pounded the bay, sucking away clods of earth. Moonlight fell on a boundless expanse of misty water, on ruined crops lashed by the waves. All the villagers far and near were gripped by panic. Many were sleepless that night in their despair. A child's ear-splitting cries filled Old Kao's hut.

"Damned Japanese!" Curses drifted through every small village window, muttered even by those tossing restlessly in their dreams.

## 7

Before this, Tzuwuchen had bought guns. One-eyed Tien appropriated a revolver, gave a mauser to his son, and handed over two rifles to some landlords' sons in the village. They agreed to drill each morning at the cross-roads under Tien Yao-wu's direction. Since these fellows had no interest in drilling and dreaded the possibility of actually being called upon to fight, they never showed up punctually or in force, and generally scattered as soon as the roll had been called. And their instructor, although a university graduate who had gone through military training in the summer vacation, had no idea how to drill them. One day he drew his men up in two lines.

"First rank, attention!" he shouted. "Second rank, forward march five steps!"

When the second rank butted the backsides of the first, Tien Yao-wu turned scarlet in front of the whole village, after which he never mustered his men again.

By these youngsters did take an interest in their guns. They slung these rifles over their shoulders at night to go whoring, and boasted that they would soon be officers. Tien Yao-wu, whose wife had not come back, was having an affair with Old Chiang's daughter Su-erh, with whom he spent most nights.

Su-erh was Old Chiang's third daughter. Her two elder sisters, both married now, were not particularly good-looking. But Su-erh was the village beauty. By fifteen she already had so many lovers that she never had to pay for a meal at a fair, or buy herself a length of material. She was nineteen this year and her spotless room had snowy white paper on the windows, a red silk quilt on the *kang*. Tien Yao-wu, arriving towards midnight, dumped his gun on the *kang* to frighten her.

"You'd better look out! If you mess around with anyone else, I'll get you with this."

"Think you're scaring me?" She chuckled. "I've handled more guns than you've seen. You lug it around, but can you use it? Can you do this?" Planting one foot on the *kang*, she laid the gun across her red-trousered knee, cocked it and pointed it at him. Tien Yao-wu ducked quickly behind the *kang*, protesting:

"Stop fooling! You might hit me!"

Su-erh clicked back the safety-catch and put the gun on the table.

"Don't try to frighten me with that!" she said. "If you threatened to stop my allowance if I went with another fellow, I might sit up and take notice."

"That's foolish talk," said Tien Yao-wu. "You can make friends with anyone you please. Soon I'll be leaving."

"Where are you going?" She trimmed the lamp and plumped down on the *kang*.

"South, to get an official post."

"Taking that with you?" She indicated the gun.

"Yes. The roads are none too safe."

"You people with money can go wherever you like. Will you take me along to wash and clean for you?" When he simply grinned, she went on, "I was only joking. Why should I go with you? I was born unlucky, hard knocks are all I expect. I'll wait and see what it's like when the Japanese really come; if one is fated to die, there's no getting away. Why worry? If the sky falls the earth will prop it up! Still, it'll cost you a pretty sum travelling south."

"We aren't short of cash," said Tien. "But my old man's buried it all. I'll have to go to our shop in town to get money."

"Even a poor man takes money for the road, and you're rich. When are you leaving? Is the date fixed yet? I must give you a good send-off!"

"There's no need for that. Get undressed now and let's sleep. I'll tell you before I go."

Undressing slowly, Su-erh said:

"The roads aren't safe. Is anyone going with you?"

"No. The Peking-Hankow Railway's cut. Old Chang will see me to Puyang and from there I'll go by train."

"Will you cross the river at Five-dragon Temple?"

"That's it." He blew out the light.

That night the arrival of troops threw the village into confusion, and One-eyed Tien sent Mang-chung to rout Tien Yao-wu out of his warm quilt. Barely had Su-erh closed her eyes again when she heard a tapping on her window.

"Has he gone?" a man called softly.

"Yes, he's gone."

"Did you find out?"

"Yes, he'll have a gun and money. Old Chang will be with him. They'll cross at Five-dragon Temple."

"When?"

"That isn't fixed yet. Just keep a watch on the ferry. And if you pull it off, don't forget to thank me!"

"You've done a good deed!" The man outside chuckled softly. "I'll buy you a new coloured jacket."

"Are you coming in to sleep?" she asked coaxingly.

"What, take another man's leavings? To hell with you!" He climbed the roof and left.

A cavalry unit had galloped into the village. At first they were taken for Japanese and the villagers bolted their doors. When the soldiers broke the doors down, it was seen that these were men of the 53rd Army. Sweat was pouring off their horses which lay down, saddles and all, in the road to rest. At once the village office prepared food, drink and fodder, while the soldiers ransacked the place, firing at random. If a dog ran across the street, they shot it dead. One-eyed Tien asked the commander to his house and was giving him a feast when some soldiers burst in. He went to the gate to say:

"Take it easy, fellows! Your commander is here."

"Devil of a commander!" They prodded One-eyed Tien with the butt of their rifles. "Fetch him out! We want to see him! If he had any guts he'd lead us against the Japanese. All this bastard does is to lead a retreat! He's nearly ridden our horses to death, the swine!"

Before cock-crow, after some looting, these troops were ordered to start south again. Cursing and swearing, they swung into their saddles and rode off helter-skelter.

"Looks bad!" One-eyed Tien had called in his son. "You must cut that long hair of yours."

"What difference will that make?" asked Tien Yao-wu glumly.

"What difference?" bellowed his father. "Does it make no difference to you if you live or die? The Japanese come down hard upon students. I'm not afraid for myself."

His mother pleaded with him too and called Old Chang to shave her son's head, round which she wrapped a new towel.

"That towel's too conspicuous," grumbled One-eyed Tien. "You'd better eat early and make a trip to town."

Tien Yao-wu's appearance with a shaven head greatly increased the villagers' consternation.

"Why has the district head given up that foreign hair style?"

"For fear of the Japanese!"

"Does a shaved head mean you're all right? We've all got shaved heads."

"Why should the Japanese care how much hair a man has?"

After collecting several hundred dollars from the shop in town, Tien Yao-wu went to the county government. The inscription above it had already been taken down, the front door to the main

building was barred and there was no one responsible about. He searched for quite a time before he found a messenger he knew, who told him that the county head and section chief had commandeered a cart and left for the south in the middle of the previous night, taking guns, money and provisions. Tien promptly went home and lost no time in packing.

"Take our title-deeds with you!" urged his mother.

"No one's going to move the land away," scoffed One-eyed Tien. "What good would it do to take away the deeds? We'll just bury them. Don't forget I'll be guarding the house!"

He sent for Old Chang and gave him certain instructions. Old Chang went back to his quarters to fetch some shoes and found Old Wen and Mang-chung on tenterhooks.

"Brother Chang!" said Old Wen. "Ask the young master if he won't take me too."

"What would you do down south?"

"Earn my rice the same as up here. I don't want to stay here to be killed by the Japanese!"

"Ask him to take me too!" begged young Mang-chung.

"What a hope!" said Old Chang. "Don't worry, things will work out. I'm starting off with him, but the moment he doesn't need me he'll send me back. That's why I'm taking an extra pair of shoes. While it suits their book they'll use us, then kick us out on to the rubbish heap! Why should you want to go with him? You could starve for all he cares!"

Not till dusk did Tien Yao-wu set off with Old Chang. To avoid attracting attention, his father and mother did not see him off. The travellers took a muddy path round the village, and met not a soul on their way. When they neared Five-dragon Temple, Old Chang went ahead to call the ferry-boat which was moored unattended by the opposite bank. Old Chang made a megaphone of his hands to hail it. Some minutes passed before an answering shout came back across the misty river.

"Coming!"

Tien Yao-wu and Old Chang waited on the shore. The water was beginning to subside but the current was swift and the boat heading downstream was tossing like a leaf. It drew alongside with only three people aboard. In the darkness a girl jumped down, calling mockingly to the ferrymen:

"Thanks for the ride! I know you won't take my money!"

"Anything to oblige!" retorted one boatman, laughing. "Next time we'll ask you for a ride."

"Get along with you! Dirty dogs!" Just then the girl caught sight of Tien and said:

"Isn't it the district head?"

Tien had recognized Su-erh's voice and answered coolly:

"I've some business in Five-dragon Temple."

"Business?" She laughed. "Even the county head has skedaddled. It's time for the district heads to hand over too!"

Not troubling to answer, Tien made Old Chang go aboard.

"Who is it?" asked Old Chang. "I don't know your voices."

The boatmen cast off in silence. The helmsman kept his back to them, looking out across the swirling water to where Su-erh was being swallowed up in the darkness. The crossing did not take long. As Tien Yao-wu jumped ashore and took out some money, the helmsman finally spoke.

"We're not asking any fare. Leave us your gun!"

"Why should I?" demanded Tien apprehensively.

"The villagers stumped up for that gun to fight the Japanese. Where are you taking it?" The helmsman leapt ashore and seized Tien's arm.

"You robbers!" cried Tien Yao-wu, struggling.

"Are we robbers, or you? We've stopped eight carts belonging to the county government. There's nothing you can do. If you don't want to travel by land, there's always the river." He heaved Tien over his shoulder.

"All right, you win!" The district head threw down his gun.

"Fifty bullets too!" said the helmsman.

"What use are bullets to me without a gun?" He handed them meekly over.

"And your money."

"I need that for my journey," protested Tien. "How am I to travel if you take it away?"

"You've more than you need. We'll leave you enough to take you to Puyang."

Some other men materialized to search him. Having taken his money they left. Out on the river the helmsman tried the new gun, firing a round from it.

"The bandits!" spluttered Tien. "Where are they from?"

"One sounded like Kao Pa, who's so thick with Su-erh," said Old Chang. "Well, do we go on?"

"What else can we do?" replied Tien. "I can't stay here. But they've left me so short of money, after seeing me one stage you'll have to go back."

## 8

After the army's retreat and the county head's flight, the villagers of Tzuwuchen resigned themselves to fate, not troubling to harvest the crops in the water-logged fields. Small groups of gamblers sprang up everywhere. A Taoist from Changshih Temple in Ankuo moved in to live with Old Chiang and set up a black shrine where he invoked ghosts and spirits. Women flocked day and night to kotow there.

Word came that the Japanese had reached Tinghsien. One of the local gentry, a salt merchant and a pharmacist had formed a committee for the maintenance of order to which all the village heads were affiliated, and they intended to welcome the Japanese into the town on August the fifteenth. One-eyed Tien returned from the county seat with some red and white cloth and ordered Old Chiang to see to the making of Japanese flags and the collection of money to pay for the cloth.

Once more Old Chiang started his round from the west of the village. He handed Chun-erh two strips of cloth, white and red.

"Cut out a round red sun and sew it in the middle of the white cloth!" he told her.

"Not I!" cried Chun-erh. "If you want to welcome them, get Su-erh to make you a flag."

"Of course we'll make one too. A handsome flag to hang over our door. If the Japanese find no flag, they kill everyone in the house, even chickens and dogs! So think again."

"I don't need to think," flung back Chun-erh. "I won't do it!" She picked up a small hoe and a handful of rape seed and went to her plot of land.

A fortnight earlier the county authorities had conscripted peasants to dig a long trench here, saying this was where the army

would fight the Japanese. It had been a big job. The trench was over ten feet deep, covered with branches, mats and a thick layer of earth. Every few dozen yards or so was a dug-out.

It was raining steadily and the crops were waiting to be harvested, but the peasants soaked to the skin worked with a will, standing up to their knees in water to dig that trench. It ran in a straight line, cutting through the ripening crops. The grain on Chun-erh's one and a half *mou* was growing well, but now the greater part was dug up, while the pretty willow at the end of her field was taken for the roofing of a dug-out. The villagers felt sorry for her, but when Mang-chung came back from digging to break the news, she simply said:

"Go ahead and dig! I'd gladly give all I have to beat the Japanese!"

Now the branches spread over the trench were still green, the earth above was still loose. Chun-erh levelled it with her hoe and sowed her rape seeds while a hawk wheeled over her head.

Her work done, she sat down by the trench and wondered: "If they'd really put up a hard fight here, would we be so scared today of the Japanese coming?"

Near by, the crops higher than the water had been reaped but the shorter were rotting in the mud. Further off, the red ears of some late-ripening sorghum were swaying in the breeze. A man was limping towards her. When she saw that he was a deserter, his rifle slung round his neck, walking with a stick, Chun-erh dodged behind a tree. But the man had already seen her and he hurried towards her. She nervously gripped her hoe tight, until his exhausted, famished look emboldened her to straighten up and ask:

"What do you want?"

"Don't be afraid, lass!" He sank painfully to the ground to rest his puffed, swollen feet. "Can you give me a bite to eat and a drink of water?"

"Why not ask in the village?"

"I daren't! The peasants hate our guts. They hate us because we don't fight the Japanese, just loot. If they caught me alone they'd bury me alive!"

"Well, and why don't you fight the Japanese?"

"You think we don't want to, lass? Little you know! We're all from the northeast and the Japanese have taken our homes — just give us a chance to hit back! But it's not up to us to decide. We were holding the front when the order came to fall back. No one cared what became of us, so we had to retreat."

"You talk big!" Chun-erh's lip curled. "I'm giving no food to a man with a gun who won't fight!"

"Go on, get me a bite!" He unslung his gun. "I'll leave this with you. It would fetch me a few dozen silver dollars, but it belongs to the state. I'll leave it to you to use against the Japanese!"

"You expect a girl like me to fight?" She laughed.

"Well, someone will use it. There's a united anti-Japanese army over our way. That's where I'm heading."

Chun-erh looked at his gun and thought it over.

"You wait here," she said presently. "I'll get you something to eat."

"We're all Chinese," declared the deserter. "While you're about it, do something else for me. If you've some worn out men's clothes at home, bring me a jacket and pants. I don't want to travel in this uniform." When she nodded, he went on, "But don't tell a soul! This is a tricky stretch of country. If anyone finds out who I am, I'm done for!"

"Don't you worry," she reassured him, and went off to tell Mang-chung and ask his advice.

"Go ahead!" said the lad. "In times like these a gun gives a fellow courage. You go back with the things while I keep an eye on him but stay out of sight so that he doesn't get the wind up."

Chun-erh found an old jacket and trousers belonging to her father, wrapped up some unleavened cakes and pickles, and took these to the soldier. When he had handed over the gun and changed his clothes he limped off, skirting the village. She did not risk carrying the gun home until nightfall.

"There's not going to be much work this winter," said Mang-chung. "While everything's in a ferment, One-eyed Tien's putting on a show of being poor. He's hinted that he won't be needing me. Besides, I've had enough of slaving for him. With this gun, I can join Kao Pa's outfit."

"Don't be in such a hurry!" retorted Chun-erh. "Kao Pa's not straight. How can you trust him? If my brother-in-law were back, that would be different. I'd let you have the gun."

She hid the rifle carefully away.



Kao Pa had made his name in these parts as a horse thief who could spirit away a fine mule without a sound. Now that he had intercepted eight government carts south of the county town, taken over the guns of the absconding officials and stopped several groups of deserters by Five-dragon Temple ford, he styled himself a regiment commander. He sent his company commanders round the villages to bully the village heads and rich families into handing over their weapons. Some, rather than part with their guns, made their sons join his outfit. Central Hopei had plenty of soldiers who "joined the colours" in this way. Kao Pa swilled and gorged himself every day at the biggest eating-house in Tzuwuchen, and spent every night with Su-erh. As time went by his force grew, his power increased, and he made Su-erh a formal offer of marriage.

Congratulatory messages from the villages all around covered the walls of Old Chiang's house and overflowed on to the street walls outside. On August the fifteenth, the day of the wedding, Kao Pa ordered two official sedan-chairs and two bridal chairs, and called out an escort of scores of cavalrymen in front and a battalion of infantry behind. For the customary fire-crackers they substituted bursts of rifle fire, with the result that no one dared to watch this brilliant procession. The people in every village they passed locked their doors and kept off the streets, which were strewn with spent cartridges.

Old Chiang, dressed in style, had his work cut out greeting the bearers of gifts. Several tables of food were ordered from the restaurant. But the gift bringers, finding the atmosphere very tense, left immediately after putting down their presents. That suited Old Chiang, who got happily befuddled.

His sole companion was the village accountant. After the newly-weds had retired to bed, the two men went on drinking and Old Chiang remarked:

"Must be lucky influences at work on my plot of land to get me a regiment commander as son-in-law."

"Luck changes with the times," replied the accountant. "And this is just a beginning. He'll rise from a regiment commander to be a brigadier and division commander. You are going to be very grand."

"That Su-erh has her head screwed on the right way." Old Chiang spoke as if she were someone else's daughter. "Go-betweens have been on our doorstep ever since she was fifteen, but she turned down every offer. It was Regiment Commander Kao took her fancy. What do you suppose makes the regiment commander so lucky?"

"That scar of his. Summer or winter, rain or shine, it's always bright red. On top of that he has nerve and brain. At a time like this such a man is bound to rise to the top."

As they were chatting, in stumped One-eyed Tien. Old Chiang made haste to offer him a seat.

"Sit here, village head. Take the seat of honour. You've always treated me before. Today I can repay your hospitality."

"I'm not here to drink!" The landlord's face was glum. "I've come to ask you a favour. When you've a chance, tell Regiment Commander Kao I'd like to invite him to a simple meal."

"There's no need for that!" said Old Chiang. "We're all old friends. Why should you go to such trouble?"

"No, I want him to come. You two must be my guests as well. Since Commissioner Chang went south, we've had no one to rely on. Now luckily we have Regiment Commander Kao. We hope he'll see to things here."

"That goes without saying," Old Chiang promptly assured him. "My son-in-law will do whatever I tell him."

Two days later a notice bearing a large official seal was posted up at the cross-roads in Tzuwuchen. Since it was three or four months since the appearance of the last official notice, all who could read crowded round.

The notice, issued by the People's Defence Corps and Political Department, called on the people to unite and take up arms to resist Japan. The commander of the corps was Lu Cheng-tsao.

A man back from Kaoyang reported that he had seen some genuine Red Army troops with a red star on their armlets. Mang-chung bounded off to share this news with Chiu-fen.

"They've come at last!" he cried. "Kaoyang's not far from here. You ought to go and have a look. Don't miss your chance again!"

Chiu-fen made ready to go, wishing she could find a companion for the road.

Kao Pa was rather down in the mouth these days. He had sent to make inquiries in Kaoyang and learned that Lu Cheng-tsao had appointed commanders to reorganize the different local units. Red Army discipline was strict, it seemed. Officers ate millet like their men, it was forbidden to take so much as a needle or thread from the people, the leaders had to undergo training too, and each regiment had a political commissar. Because of his shady past and dislike of discipline, he could not decide what to do.

One night he confided his fears to Su-erh, who laughed.

"What's worrying you? Just go and ask them to confirm your command."

"Who knows if they will or not? I've not kept in with them. They may march in one day and order us to hand over all our guns!"

"I've a way to get on their right side." She pursed her lips.

"You know Commander Lu?" He brightened up.

"Not Commander Lu, but someone fairly high-ranking. They say he's quite a big shot in the Red Army."

"Out with it—who is the fellow?" cried Kao Pa.

"Kao Ching-shan of Five-dragon Temple. You go to the Red Army in Kaoyang and tell them you fought with Kao Ching-shan that year during the uprising. In other words, you helped the Red Army. That's your trump card. They're bound to give you a command."

This struck Kao Pa as feasible, still he protested:

"We've never had much truck with his folk. They may not believe what I say."

"That's easily fixed."

Su-erh jumped up from the *kang* and went to find Chun-erh, from whom she learned of Chiu-fen's plan to go and look for her husband.

"Sister Chiu-fen!" cried Su-erh, overjoyed. "The roads aren't safe and it's a long way to Kaoyang. That's no easy journey. But my husband's going to see Commander Lu. Why don't you go with him? You'll have an escort and can travel in style. I tell you what: I'll ask them to give you a horse so that you needn't trail through the mud and dirt. When you find Brother Ching-shan in Kaoyang, what a happy reunion you'll have — just like in a play! It's been hard for you all these years without your husband. Others may not have noticed that but I saw it all right. The first thing you should do when you see Brother Ching-shan is to ask for some decent clothes. He's a big official now, what he says goes, you can have whatever you like!"

Before Chiu-fen had recovered from her surprise at this speech, Chun-erh put in:

"If I were you, I'd go on my own two feet. It's not as if you never left home before!"

"What way is that to talk, sister?" Su-erh clapped Chun-erh on the shoulder. "You're too young to understand these things. Chiu-fen will be a lady there. People will be crowding round to stare at her. Invitations will come pouring in! It wouldn't look well for her to go on foot. I know plenty of wives beg their way a thousand *li* to find their husbands, but here's a horse ready waiting for her to ride. Go on! It's as safe as riding in a bridal sedan-chair. I've ridden one myself and I know!"

Refusing to take no for an answer, she caught up Chiu-fen's bundle and ran off.

"See here!" she told Kao Pa. "It's worked out even better than I dared hope. She was just setting off to find her husband. You can go with her."

Kao Pa had a piebald horse saddled for Chiu-fen and ordered one of his men to act as her groom.

"You'd better change your clothes," Su-erh advised him. "That fancy get-up of yours won't go down well with the Red Army."

So Kao Pa changed his silk suit for a khaki uniform and removed the red silk tassel from his gun. He also made his men dress less garishly. Then he put on the rush sandals Su-erh had

made him. Snowy white with red pompons in front, these were said to be the rage in the Red Army.

So he set off with a company to Kaoyang.

At the cross-roads in all the villages they passed, the village heads and their deputies stood beside tables laden with fruit and tea and bowed respectfully to welcome the regiment commander and his men.

"You fools!" swore Kao Pa in exasperation. "Who told you to put up this show? Don't do it again!"

The village heads, not quite knowing what this portended, quickly had the tables removed. Seeing a woman riding among Kao Pa's men, they jumped to the conclusion that he had kidnapped someone else's wife!

## 10

Chiu-fen had never ridden a horse before. Soon her legs were aching and sweat was dripping off her. They proceeded at a brisk pace, not stopping to rest, and she reflected wryly, "If I'd known how uncomfortable this was going to be, I'd have walked, as Chun-erh suggested!" She even wondered if Kao Pa might be trying to kidnap her!

It was a long, tiring journey, but at last as dusk was falling they sighted Kaoyang. They were still some distance from the gate when out came a squad of soldiers, neatly equipped, with the red star she had heard about on their armlets. Their officer greeted Kao Pa and told him to leave his men outside and go into the city alone.

"This young woman has come to find her husband," said Kao Pa. "You must let her in too."

The Red Army men took some persuading, but eventually they agreed and escorted them through the gate. The streets were lively, the shops brightly lit, and brisk business was being done in the restaurants. The town was full of soldiers, some in uniform, some in civilian dress, some in civilian dress and an army cap with a pistol at the belt. All around Chiu-ten saw slogans and notices calling on people to resist Japanese aggression. All around she heard singing.

They took Kao Pa to army headquarters, then escorted Chiu-fen to the Political Department. This was housed in a large compound, and Chiu-fen's feet kept slipping on the stone steps. There were several square tables in the main hall, the walls of which were plastered with slogans and maps and hung with rifles and cartridge-belts. Some men in grey uniform were seated round the tables holding a meeting. They offered Chiu-fen a seat and one soldier asked with a smile:

"Are you from Shentse?"

"That's right," she said. "I'm looking for Kao Ching-shan of Five-dragon Temple."

"Kao Ching-shan?" repeated the soldier thoughtfully. "Didn't he take part in the uprising that year? What relation is he to you?"

"My husband." Chiu-fen lowered her head. "We both joined in that year."

"There's someone here from your village named Kao." The soldier smiled. "I'll send for him." He turned to a boy. "Fetch Section Chief Kao of the civil transport section. Then bring a basin of hot water and ask the cook to serve a meal for a guest."

After Chiu-fen had washed her face, someone brought in a big bowl of millet and another of cabbage and pork. They urged her to eat but, hungry as she was, she was too excited to swallow many mouthfuls. She was straining her ears to catch every sound from the courtyard.

"You have a mass base in your village," said one of the men. "Are you fully mobilized yet? What are Kao Pa's troops like?"

Chiu-fen, hardly knowing how to answer, replied:

"Little better than a bunch of bandits!"

The Red Army men laughed.

"Never mind," said one. "Spring rain makes weeds and crops shoot up together. But the people as a whole are dead keen to resist Japan. Tomorrow Section Chief Kao will be going out your way to straighten things out."

Footsteps were heard outside and someone said, "Here he is!" Chiu-fen sprang to her feet to stare eagerly at the man who now walked in. Short, with glasses on, he had the look of a student.

"Where's the visitor from Five-dragon Temple?" he asked.

Chiu-fen smiled and exclaimed:

"Why, Kao Hsiang! When did you come back?"

Kao Hsiang walked over to peer short-sightedly at her. "Sister Chiu-fen!" He clapped his hands. "I guessed it was you." He told his comrades, "Let me introduce you to Kao Ching-shan's wife—a woman fighter in the peasant uprising."

"How did you know it was me, not your wife?" demanded Chiu-fen.

"It comes to much the same thing." Kao Hsiang chuckled. "You mustn't be too disappointed. Count seeing me the same as seeing Ching-shan!"

"Have you any news of him?"

"Yes, he's come north, I heard that in Yenan. He went to the border region and I saw his name on a military communiqué. I've asked the organization section to put him in touch with me. Before long we should know where he is."

Just then in walked a girl in a blue gown with a grey army jacket over her shoulders. She called in an attractive voice to Kao Hsiang:

"Are you ready, Section Chief Kao? They're all waiting for you to talk."

Then she turned round, smiling, and Chiu-fen saw it was One-eyed Tien's daughter-in-law, Li Pei-chung.

"All right, I'm coming," said Kao Hsiang. "You come too, Sister Chiu-fen, and have a look. This is a meeting for the women of Kaoyang. Much bigger and livelier than those meetings we used to hold ten years ago."

It was nearly midnight before the meeting ended, but Chiu-fen could not close her eyes all night. She was re-living so many scenes from the past, all she had felt and heard ten years ago. It looked as if what had happened then was being repeated now all over the country, yet with a big difference too. It was the same short Kao Hsiang who had led the meeting, addressed it and shouted slogans. Like a bird winging through the air, he seemed to be urging others to fly with him. Ten years in prison had not crushed the young man's spirit, only made him more experienced and capable. In that case, ten years of fighting could surely not have destroyed her Ching-shan's youth or damped his ardour!

But what was One-eyed Tien's daughter-in-law doing here? She and Kao Hsiang seemed to be on the best of terms. Did

these men away from home find new girl friends and forget their own wives?

The next morning she got on a truck with Kao Hsiang and Pei-chung, and together they set off for Shentse. They passed three county-towns, Lihsien, Poyeh and Ankuo, and dozens of villages. The peasants' heartfelt desire to fight the Japanese aggressors and save their country was obvious all over the Hopei plain, in every town, village and field, for everywhere Kao Hsiang received the warmest of welcomes.

The truck jolted over the road, which badly needed repairing, and Pei-chung sang in the teeth of the wind all the way. Chiu-fen felt that after ten difficult years she was sharing today in the glory of the struggle. She had no idea of the further hardships and tests in store for her in the long years of the War of Resistance Against Japan.

They reached Tzuwuchen towards dusk. As soon as Chiu-fen alighted, someone took her aside and whispered:

"Ching-shan's back, in Five-dragon Temple! You came home by truck, he drove home a herd of goats!"

Without stopping for a second, Chiu-fen rushed down to the river. The people on the ferry-boat teased her:

"When you waited day and night, he never came. When at last he does come, nobody knows where you are!"

From the boat, Chiu-fen saw a crowd round the door of their hut. The rosy light of the setting sun picked out a tall man dressed in light blue homespun. He was standing there talking and laughing with the neighbours. With a wife's sure instinct she recognized the husband she had not seen for ten years!

As she jumped ashore her legs very nearly gave way. Her heart contracted. She felt an urge to sink down on the bank and have a good long cry.

But people were waving to her, calling her name. Her husband, too, had turned to look at her. With scarlet cheeks, Chiu-fen climbed the embankment.

They had come home at a time when the central Hopei plain, undefended, was in desperate case and the people at a loss what to do.

## 11

When Chiu-fen reached the top of the embankment the neighbours left, smiling and talking. Ching-shan smiled at her too before stepping inside the hut. His father had cut an armful of grass on the flats to feed the goats tethered under their south window. At sight of them Chiu-fen laughed.

"Is this the fortune he's made all these years he's been away?"

Scratching the horns of a large billy-goat, Old Kao said:

"I haven't asked whether he's made a fortune or not. But this lot he's brought back will keep me busy all winter. Have you eaten anything? Go in and get a meal with him."

Chiu-fen stepped over the threshold with the same sensation as ten years before when she alighted from the bridal sedan-chair. The hut struck her as suddenly brighter and warmer than usual. Her tall husband, seated on the edge of the *kang*, was looking searchingly at her. Hot tears sprang to her eyes and she hurriedly turned to the stove to make up the fire. The embers below the ashes were still red and, as soon as she worked the bellows, the coal started smoking and red flames leapt up. The sight of the blazing fire had a steadying effect. Chiu-fen emptied out all the flour from their earthen pot, energetically kneaded the dough and carefully rolled and chopped noodles, not sparing salt, oil, soya sauce or vinegar for the seasoning. When the water boiled she took the lid off the pan and with both hands put in the long, fine noodles.

Suddenly, on the far corner of the *kang*, a baby started crying. Kao Ching-shan whirled round in astonishment, and saw that a child of less than two had woken up and was clenching its little fists, lustily kicking and crying.

"Well! Where did this come from?" He stood up and looked at Chiu-fen.

"Where did it come from?" She giggled. "A long way away. Don't you start getting ideas! This summer a refugee from the northeast was killed at the ferry by Japanese planes, and your dad decided we'd bring up her child. That's how you've a ready-made son here waiting for you!"

Ching-shan chuckled and dandled the baby as if holding his tortured motherland to his heart. His eyes were moist.

They were having supper when Kao Hsiang dropped in. The two old comrades-in-arms gripped hands silently for a while. Then Ching-shan took a letter from his pocket and passed it over.

"That's my letter of introduction," he explained. "The Party told me to hand it over to you. To avoid trouble on the road, they advised me to dress like a peasant and bring a flock of goats. I had an easy journey, but didn't expect to find you at my journey's end!"

After reading the letter, Kao Hsiang said:

"You've come in the nick of time. I've no army experience, and it's a ticklish situation here. Don't go to Kaoyang yet awhile. Help me with a job here first!"

Before Ching-shan could ask what job this was, Kao Hsiang's father and daughter arrived.

"Who've you come to see?" asked Chiu-fen, taking the girl's hand.

"My dad!" was the reply.

Chiu-fen pointed him out, but the child hung back shyly from this stranger. Kao Hsiang strode over and hugged her.

"Who sent you to find your dad?" teased Chiu-fen.

"My mum!" The little girl laughed.

The whole room joined in her laughter.

"I don't think I ever saw her," remarked Ching-shan to Kao Hsiang. "How tall she's grown!"

"Of course you haven't seen her," said Chiu-fen. "Her mother was still lying in when you went away."

"It shows how quickly we're growing old," observed Kao Ssu-hai with a smile. "Here are these children catching up with us."

"I don't think Sister Chiu-fen has aged at all," said Kao Hsiang. "She looks the same as the day we left the village."

"Shows how short-sighted you are!" retorted Chiu-fen. "You just don't see how I've changed. Stop making fun of me. If you'd waited a few more years before coming home, you'd have found me a white-haired old woman!"

"Spoken like a heroine!" mocked Kao Hsiang, patting his daughter's head. "The fact is, it's no good for revolutionaries to come home too often. Leaving again is too much of a wrench."

"Do you call this coming home too often?" demanded Chiu-fen.

"I won't argue with you." He grinned. "I want to have a

talk now with Brother Ching-shan, so that we can get things moving. Do the rest of you mind leaving us for a while?"

Old Kao left with Kao Hsiang's father and the little girl.

"Can't I listen?" asked Chiu-fen, pouting.

"I'm afraid not," said Kao Hsiang. "You haven't made contact with the Party yet. After all, we've been separated for ten years. In a day or two I'll have to go over your history."

"You're welcome to." Chiu-fen lit the lamp for them and left.

While the two young men talked, Chiu-fen and the others sat on the dike outside. One by one, stars appeared in the sky and the little girl pointed up at them.

"There's another, grandad. And another over there!"

Even after the whole sky was studded with stars, the two young men were still deep in their discussion. Kao Hsiang's father said to Old Kao:

"Were we fools, longing for our boys to come back? Now they're back they just drive us out to sit in the fields."

Old Kao puffed at his pipe and made no reply. Sparks from the bowl of his pipe flew over the bank. His son's return made him happy but recalled sad memories too. They were back, the two of them, planning some new uprising together again. The enthusiasm, struggles and bloodshed of ten years ago rose before his eyes once more, and the faces of friends who had fallen seemed to have encircled him in the late autumn fields. The old man was stirred, yet he felt a pang of sadness. It had been a hard life for the last ten years since his son left home and the uprising was defeated. They had taken some living through for him and Chiu-fen, those long days and weary nights! And now the youngsters were looking for trouble again. Last time they had fought the landlords and local despots, this time they were going to pit themselves against the Japanese aggressors. This enemy had a strong army and had already swallowed up whole provinces of China, driving the government troops headlong before them. How could simple country folk with their crude rifles and guns get the better of such an opponent? As he cogitated, the grass by his side was wet by the night dew. Kao Hsiang's daughter yawned and fell asleep nestled in her grandfather's arms.

At last Chiu-fen lost patience and swept into the house.

"Go on home, Kao Hsiang!" she cried. "You'll soon have used up all our lamp oil. It's nearly dawn. Your wife's asking for you and a comfortable quilt is waiting for you at home!"

"When will you women learn to put first things first?" With a laugh Kao Hsiang rose to his feet. "All right, we'll finish our talk tomorrow, Ching-shan. You've driven those goats several dozen *li* today, you'd better turn in. I must clear off before Sister Chiu-fen drives me out with her rolling-pin."

After Kao Hsiang's family had disappeared into the night, Old Kao brought the goats inside, then put on his tattered padded gown.

"I'm off to find somewhere in the village to sleep," he said.

"Don't go yet, dad!" Ching-shan stood up. "Let's have a talk."

"Plenty of time for that later, now you're home. I can hardly keep my eyes open. Mind you lock up!"



Excitement over her brother-in-law's return kept Chun-erh awake half the night. She rose early the next day and asked Mang-chung, who was drawing water at the well, to leave his buckets and come over to her house. Having heated water to wash her face, she sat down by the window and combed her hair before a small cracked mirror her mother had left. Then she took out a new print jacket and put it on. When Mang-chung arrived she told him:

"My brother-in-law's come back. Let's go and see him!"

With a chuckle, Mang-chung retorted:

"The morning star and the evening star never meet, and neither should brother-in-law and sister-in-law! You ought to be keeping out of his way, not running over to see him!"

"Mine isn't the usual run of brother-in-law. A Red Army man doesn't worry about all those old-fangled rules. Anyway, I'm doing this for you!"

"Doing what for me?"

"You put on that rifle of ours, and I'll take you to sign on to serve under him. To give me face, he'll have to treat you right!"

"Just listen to you!" Mang-chung grinned. "He's been gone ten years and more, and you bragged enough about what a fine

fellow he was; but he comes back without a single bodyguard, driving a flock of goats. Don't you blush for him? Kao Hsiang now, he rides back on a truck with a bunch of bodyguards. And when he stands in the streets of Tzuwuchen, the people crowd round seven or eight deep to watch. That's the man for me! I'll go and sign on as a soldier under Kao Hsiang. After working half my life as a farm hand, I don't want to spend the other half herding goats!"

"What's come over you?" cried Chun-erh. "Are you ashamed to be poor? So keen to get rich? Haven't you seen that opera *The Scholar's Return,* where the man who passed first in the palace test disguises himself as a beggar? The firmer a man's roots, the less he cares about appearances."

"Which of us is ashamed to be poor?" flung back Mang-chung. "Remember what you said to me that evening under the willows? Well, have it your own way. Get me the gun."

Chun-erh took the deserter's rifle from the flue below the *kang* and, having dusted it carefully, put it down. Mang-chung reached out to pick it up.

"Wait a bit!" she cried and opened her battered chest to whisk out a new jacket. "I've made you this coat. Try it on!"

Mang-chung cheerfully did as he was told and Chun-erh surveyed him critically from all sides.

"It'll do," she decided. "Now take the gun."

He slung it over his shoulder and drew himself up proudly for her inspection. Chun-erh tied a red ribbon round the barrel of the rifle. Then she locked up the house and the two of them set off.

"I must take the buckets back," said Mang-chung, "and tell my boss I'm off to be a soldier."

"Don't be in such a hurry," advised Chun-erh. "Leave the buckets where they are. If he has no water, let him miss a meal! You'd better not give notice till you've joined up."

They walked on, one in front of the other, with children hopping and skipping after them, tugging at Mang-chung's new jacket, stroking his gun.

"Are you going to join up, Mang-chung?" asked some peasants who saw him.

"I'm going to fight the Japanese!" he replied with a grin.

"Why are you all dressed up, Chun-erh?" some women asked her.

"I'm seeing him off to the army!" she answered, smiling.

"Well, wonders will never cease!" There was general laughter.

Soon they reached Five-dragon Temple. Kao Ching-shan and Mang-chung had already met in the hills, and now Chiu-fen explained the lad's background and his relationship to their family, while Chun-erh explained how she had come by the gun. Kao Hsiang said they needed someone they could trust and Mang-chung could act as Ching-shan's messenger. He sent for two new uniforms, wanting them to make a good impression at the meeting that day, the rally at which Kao Pa's outfit was to be reorganized.

This rally to reorganize all the local units was to take place on the sand banks by the Huto. The county government had held a mobilization meeting and sent representatives. They had also got the best carpenters in the neighbourhood to bring timber, bamboos and matting to fix up an impressive review stand facing the river. A high wind had been blowing since morning, swirling sand into people's faces and flapping the bunting on which were the two slogans: "Strengthen the national united front to resist Japan! Wage guerrilla warfare in the enemy rear!"

Three regiments, led by Kao Pa, Li So of Chiaochiuchen and Chang Ta-chiu of Matienchen, were to be incorporated. The three commanders, neatly turned out, took their places on the stand to regroup their men.

But the ranks were so crowded and ragged that they could not straighten them out. The more orders were shouted, the greater the confusion, till finally fighting started and shots were fired. The three commanders on the stand stamped and swore, threatening to shoot the men who had opened fire, but they could not find the offenders. It was getting on for noon when Kao Hsiang, in charge of the rally, asked Ching-shan to help restore order. Ching-shan conferred with the three regiment commanders, then summoned their battalion commanders and told them first to lead their men off, then march them back to the positions assigned. So at long last some order was achieved.

This motley assembly of soldiers had barely squatted down holding their rifles when they were surrounded by pedlars and snack-vendors. The formation of troops in all the villages had

resulted in a mushroom growth of stalls and portable kitchens to sell the soldiers flapjacks, dumplings, smoked chicken or beancurd, for the villagers could make easy money this way. News of this rally of three regiments before a grand review stand had brought vendors rushing to the spot, jostling for the best position and raising pandemonium as they cried their wares. And the appetizing sights and smells set the troops milling about again to buy titbits. Ching-shan set Mang-chung to reason with the vendors, and finally they were persuaded to leave.

Then Kao Pa, straddling on the stand, introduced Kao Hsiang.

"Brothers, this is Commander Lu's representative, Commissioner Kao! Let's clap him!"

Applause burst out down below.

"Comrades!" cried Kao Hsiang. "The Japanese imperialists have invaded our land and killed our countrymen. Now they're shoving their way to our doorstep! The Japanese want to destroy our country. They want to enslave us! What do you say to that?"

"Down with the bastards!" yelled the troops.

"Down with Japanese imperialism!" shouted Kao Hsiang.

His cry was taken up by the ranks and carried off by the wild wind over the racing waves.

"We want to defend our motherland and protect our homes," said Kao Hsiang. "We must drive Japanese imperialism out of China. Comrades, you stout fellows want to resist Japan. When you saw the enemy approaching, you didn't run away and you didn't surrender. Instead you took up arms to fight the invaders. That was a fine thing to do, our country and our people honour you for it! On behalf of the People's Defence Corps headquarters and Political Department, I salute you all!"

Laughter and shouts of approval sounded below. The men were listening intently now. Kao Hsiang went on:

"You comrades here have joined the resistance for different reasons. Some of you were so ground down that you formed robber bands to operate at night and scatter at dawn. Some are the sons of rich families who joined up rather than part with their guns. Some have joined because it's been a bad year, this winter is going to be very hard, and as soldiers you can eat at the army mess. Well, the fighting that's coming will test us. Time-servers

will soon be shown up. We must reform ourselves and our way of thinking. We must turn ourselves into a well-organized resistance force, well led and disciplined!"

Then he proclaimed the Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention,* as well as the chief principles governing relations between officers and men, between the army and the people. He continued:

"It's a just, honourable war we're fighting, and we shall certainly win. We're not afraid of Japan's superior weapons, only of lack of unity in our own ranks. Never mind if the Japanese have taken some of our towns, we'll fight guerrilla warfare in their rear and set up bases to resist Japan! Let those who have guns give guns, those who have money give money, and those who have labour power give labour power. Let everybody join in, men and women, young and old, to cut the enemy lines of communication, to give him not a moment's peace in his rear. Comrades, our country relies on us, the people are counting on us. We must bravely take up the task of liberating our motherland. The aim of our fighting is to drive out the Japanese invaders and build up a new China independent, rich and strong!"

Finally he read out the order from headquarters. The three regiments were to be reorganized into the Seventh Detachment of the People's Defence Corps under the command of Kao Ching-shan and with Kao Hsiang as political commissar.



For the last few days One-eyed Tien had been lying on his *kang* with no relish for his rice or tea. Taking the truck's honking

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* The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention were the rules of discipline laid down by Comrade Mao Tse-tung for the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army during the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-1936). The Three Main Rules are: (1) Obey orders in all your actions; (2) Don't take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses; and (3) Turn in everything captured. The Eight Points for Attention are as follows: (1) Speak politely; (2) Pay fairly for what you buy; (3) Return everything you borrow; (4) Pay for anything you damage; (5) Don't hit or swear at people; (6) Don't damage crops; (7) Don't take liberties with women and (8) Don't ill-treat captives.

that day to mean the arrival of the Japanese, he snatched up his white flag with the red sun and dashed out to the street, afraid he might be late to welcome the conquerors. But the sight that met his eyes was his daughter-in-law in army uniform, returned with that notorious Red, Kao Hsiang! Hastily rolling up his flag, the landlord tucked it under one arm and slunk home. Since then he had not left his *kang*. His wife, afraid his depression would end in a break-down, urged him to take a turn outside and call on his friends.

"Leave me alone, woman!" snapped One-eyed Tien. "Where could I go? My own daughter-in-law has joined that gang. I'm ashamed to show my face!"

"Don't mention that bitch to me!" ground out his wife. "Act as if she were dead. Soon as Yao-wu comes back, we'll get him to divorce her."

"Don't worry!" retorted her husband. "Long before your son comes back she'll have broken with us."

The wind was swirling dust against their newly papered windows. Shouting from the great rally by the river was carried in gusts to their ears.

"They're out to make trouble again!" swore One-eyed Tien. "Go and bolt the gate. That din gets on my nerves!"

His wife left the *kang* to do as she was told, when in came their hired-hand Mang-chung wearing a new army uniform with a gun slung over his shoulder. As he drew himself up in the middle of the room, Mrs. Tien scuttled back to the *kang*.

"What does this mean?" One-eyed Tien sat bolt upright, scowling.

"I'm leaving you, boss." Mang-chung smiled. "I've joined the army."

"What!" The landlord gave a start. "You should have got my permission first, you young fool!"

"I don't see as how you can blame me. You told me some time back that there wouldn't be work for all of us this winter and I'd better find myself some other job."

"I meant a decent, honest job." One-eyed Tien screwed up his sightless eye. "What possessed you to join that lawless gang? Don't you know what riff-raff they are? They'll come to no good. The day the Japanese soldiers arrive, it's likely the whole

lot will lose their heads. You listen to me, there's a good lad, and take off that uniform. Give them back their gun! No matter how badly things go, I'll make shift to feed you. Because we've been master and man so long and I know you're a decent young fellow, I'm talking to you like this for your own good. If it were anyone else, I'd let him go to his ruin."

Mrs. Tien added her voice to her husband's persuasion, putting on such a show of concern that Mang-chung, who had been walking on air, hardly knew what to do. He answered stolidly:

"It's no use, I've already joined up. They've all seen me with this gun."

"Never mind that!" said One-eyed Tien. "Just tell them your boss won't have it." He caught himself up. "No! Just say you thought better of it."

"But I haven't," answered Mang-chung decidedly. "It's no use your arguing. It's my own life I'm risking, so why should you worry? I'll trouble you to pay me my wages."

One-eyed Tien's face darkened.

"You dare defy me!" he thundered. "If you won't do as I say, not a copper shall you have!"

It was Mang-chung's turn to flare up.

"Stop throwing your weight about!" he cried. "Just try to stop my wages!"

Shifting the rifle on his back, he flung out.

Mrs. Tien gaped. "Why," she faltered, "they've started a rebellion again!"

"Have you only just discovered that?" sneered her husband.

Mang-chung went from the inner courtyard to the stable. Old Chang, just back from ploughing, was squatting in the doorway cleaning the plough. Old Wen inside was mixing fodder for the cattle. Catching sight of Mang-chung's uniform, he smiled.

"That's the boy!" they cried. "You've been as good as your word!"

"I've come to say good-bye!" Mang-chung beamed on them both. "I want to thank you for all you've done for me and taught me these years we've worked together."

"What have we taught you?" demanded Old Chang. "To work like an ox and to put up with hardships! Well, just don't forget

us, that's all, now that you've bettered yourself and found a way out."

"Look here, Mang-chung," said Old Wen. "We've been together, day and night, all these years and had no big rows but plenty of little squabbles. Don't hold those tiffs against me! I'm not saying this because you're going, but we brothers ought to drink a few cups together!"

"Don't ask him to drink," said Old Chang. "A family has family rules, a shop has shop rules, an army has army rules. He must put his whole heart now into soldiering and learn good habits, not bad ones. Hardships for yourself, enjoyment for others, Mang-chung! Be honest and work steadily! Keep a watch on your eyes and your tongue! Don't try to take any mean advantages and don't bully the common people! Will you remember this, lad?"

"Those old household maxims of yours may be no use in the army," scoffed Old Wen.

"Yes, they will," said Mang-chung. "And I shall remember them."

His eyes pricked and two tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Go along then," said Old Chang. "We mustn't keep you."

Mang-chung picked up the groom and swept the *kang* and the floor, then took the buckets to fetch water from the well. But Old Wen stopped him, protesting:

"Hurry up and go! You can leave these chores to me."

Mang-chung paced irresolutely round his old quarters and the stable, then lingered for a few moments on the threshing-floor looking at the door to the house, now bolted and barred. At last he took a warm leave of his old mates and shook the dust of the landlord's house off his feet.

It was early in the grim winter of '37 when this eighteen-year-old peasant lad took his first step towards freedom. The life he left was one long round of back-breaking toil. A farm hand went cold and hungry year after year, growing old without house or field of his own, only to be driven away in the end like an old worn-out ox. But now he had become one of the people's fighters and, with his motherland, was to win through hard times to glory.

With these thoughts in mind, Mang-chung walked to Chun-erh's cottage. The wicker gate was ajar. He pushed it gently

open and latched it behind him. In the courtyard flooded with sunshine, plump, shiny gourds had ripened, but their yellow leaves were withering. A large white rooster with a scarlet comb was flapping dazzling wings and crowing at the foot of the trellis. At this sound, a speckled hen some distance away started preening her feathers with her pointed beak.

A rosy face pressed for a second against the small window-pane, and Mang-chung knew that Chun-erh was at home. Opening the door and stepping inside, he found her by the window, her head bent over some work.

"What are you making?" he asked.

"Another pair of shoes for you." She looked up. "Well, in that uniform you look a real soldier! What did you do with the jacket I made for you?"

"I'm wearing it underneath. But why trouble with those shoes? They issue everything we need in the army."

"Do they?" said Chun-erh. "Anyway, I'll make these for you to wear first. It looks bad, your toes showing through, when you've got that smart uniform on!"

"Why are you looking so put out?" Mang-chung sat on the edge of the *kang,* his back against the door. On the opposite wall were four New Year woodcuts in colour, scenes from *Hsueh Jen-kuei Marches East.* His gaze was fixed on the picture of the parting by the cave.

Chun-erh said nothing. The rims of her eyes were red.

"What's wrong?" asked Mang-chung. "Sorry you gave me your gun? You can have it back and put it away again. Now that I'm in the army, I don't have to worry about getting a gun!"

"You idiot!" Chun-erh laughed. "You'll be leaving now, and I may never see you again."

"Why not? I'm not going far, just a stone's throw from home!"

"I'm not so sure. Each step will take you further away from me. Look at Ching-shan, away for ten years!"

"How can I compare with him?" retorted Mang-chung. "I'll die happy if I'm ever half the man he is. You should have seen him at that rally today. Was he hot stuff!"

"You must learn from him and do even better," said Chun-erh. "Don't give my sister a chance to laugh at us!"

"I'll remember what you've said," Mang-chung assured her.

"You'll be gone a long time." Chun-erh lowered her head. "Don't forget me. Not even if you become an officer."

Mang-chung did not know how to answer. His cheeks burning, he protested:

"What nonsense you do talk! As if I could ever forget you!"

"Prove it then!" Chun-erh raised her flushed face, a radiance in her eyes that would have melted even a heart of stone.

"Prove it?" repeated Mang-chung. "Want me to put it in writing?"

"No!" She gave a breathless laugh. "But why did you tease me so that day under the willows?" Hiding her face in her hands, she burst into tears.

Mang-chung sat nonplussed for several minutes before he grasped what she meant. He took Chun-erh gently in his arms and pressed his lips to her cheek.

"All right!" She pushed him away. "That'll do. You must go. Whatever happens, I'll be waiting for you."

Mang-chung hurried back to his unit. No ties had held the lad before, but now something had fired his blood and made him determined to show himself worthy of his sweetheart's love.

In the days to come, steeled by warfare and revolution, little by little this village boy increased in mental stature. For years he owned nothing but the shoes on his feet, a coarse cotton uniform, a stub of pencil and a little notebook, but his insight into life grew steadily richer and stronger. For ten years and more he fought doggedly on with no respite day or night. Battling over the mountains and plains of his great homeland, he was exposed to wind and frost, to rain and dew, to hunger, cold and illness. But whether wounded in action, opening up waste land for the villagers, working or studying, this former farm hand kept a strict watch on himself and proved a worthy member of the Chinese Communist Party. One flag only fluttered before his eyes, one voice only called to him. His country's honour and independence, the contribution he might make to the revolution, and the love of a village girl, these were the sole concern of young Mang-chung's heart.

(To be continued)

*Translated by Gladys Yang*
*Illustrations by Huang Chou*

LU YU

# Poems

## A VISIT TO A VILLAGE WEST OF THE MOUNTAINS

Don't sneer at the lees in the peasants' wine,
In a good year they've chicken and pork to offer guests.
Where hills bend, streams wind and the pathway seems to
end,
Past dark willows and flowers in bloom lies another village.
They greet the spring sacrifice here with pipes and drums,
And dress simply, keeping up the old traditions.
Some evening when I'm free and there is moonlight,
I shall stroll over with my stick and knock at their gate.

## A JOURNEY SOUTH OF THE MOUNTAIN

Three days have I journeyed south of Chungnan Mountain
On a highway running straight from east to west;
The plain, flat and fertile, stretches out of sight,
Green the wheat fields, dense and dark the mulberry trees.
Close to Hanku Pass and the old land of Chin
The mettlesome people swing and play ball together;
Thick grows the alfalfa, the horses here are sturdy;
Willows line the roads and carts go rumbling past. . . .

Here kingdoms rose and fell in days gone by,
But the hills and streams are unchanged;
Chill clouds hang low over the Marshal's Altar,*
The spring sun sets before the Minister's Temple.**
Two score years and more we have lost the Central Plain,
Hard to win it back from the Yangtse and Huai Valleys;
But let our troops descend with sounding drums
From their base on this high plateau within the Pass.

## ENCOUNTERING LIGHT RAIN AT THE SWORD PASS

My clothes are soiled with dust and stained with wine,
But each stage of the long journey is entrancing. . . .
And I ask myself: Am I a poet,
Jogging through Sword Pass on my donkey in light rain?

## WRITTEN IN MY CUPS AT NIGHT ON THE SEVENTEENTH OF THE THIRD MONTH

I carved a whale that year in the Eastern Ocean,
Gave play to my valour among white waves mountain-high;
In the Southern Hills last autumn I shot a tiger,
And snow muffled my sables as home I rode by night. . . .
How ridiculously have I aged this year!
I wince at the grey hair, the wan face in my mirror;
And only when wine rekindles the old fires
Do I bare my head and shout defiance again.

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* Where Han Hsin was appointed commander of the Han forces in 206 B.C.

** The temple of Chuko Liang, prime minister of the kingdom of Shu in the third century.

While the Tartar hordes run wild, my heart cannot rest,
My sword clangs solitary by my bed;
The light gutters out as I wake in the shabby post-house,
Storm batters the windows and the third watch sounds.

## NEWS COMES OF FIGHTING AMONG THE TARTARS

That year we campaigned south of the Southern Hills,
Often riding out to hunt at night after drinking;
The game piled up: black bears, grey rhinoceros. . . .
And bare-handed I dragged back a shaggy tiger.
At times I climbed a height, gazed towards Changan,
And chanted my grief to the sky while my tears fell like
rain.
Now my grey hair betrays my age,
Yet I long to lay down my life for my noble lord.
When word comes of wars among the Tartar tribes
I fondle my blade in the autumn wind, and tears
Will not let me speak of the Eight Tombs at Loyang,*
Dust-stained sepulchres among the chilly pines. . . .
I am nearing fifty and wear a scholar's cap
When I long to wear riding breeches;
An old charger brooding in his box, ashamed,
Not even a "dried fish ferried across the river"!**

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* The tombs of the emperors of the Northern Sung dynasty.

** An allusion to the Han folk song, *A Dried Fish*:

The dried fish, ferried across the river, weeps;
Too late he repents his folly!
He writes a letter to the bream and tench
Warning them to be more wary!

## A STROLL THROUGH SOME GARDENS IN BLOSSOM TIME

A passion for flowers has driven me distracted,
What if sun or wind should spoil their crimson sweetness?
I pen my plea at night to the Bright Hall of Heaven,
Craving dull days to preserve the apple blossom.

## MOONLIGHT OVER THE MOUNTAIN PASS

For fifteen years we have made peace with the Tartars,
Our frontier generals rest idle, their swords sheathed;
Deep within vermilion gates there is singing and dancing,
Horses die plump in their stables, bow-strings are broken,
And the tocsin simply hastens the waning moon,
While the hair of the men who joined up at thirty is white.
Who can gauge a soldier's heart from the sound of his flute?
Did they perish in vain, those whose bones gleam white on
the sand?
Since ancient times war has raged on the Central Plain—
Will the sons of the Huns plague us still, and their sons' sons?
A subject people, weary to death, longs for freedom,
There is no counting the tears that flow tonight!

## PASSING MOUNT LINGSHIH

Peaks looming strange before my horse appal me;
The mountains of Wu and Shu are nothing to this,
So green, so dark, soaring sheer into space. . . .
Too bad to confine this giant within one small verse!

**TOWARDS MIDNIGHT ON THE ELEVENTH OF THE FIFTH MONTH, I DREAMED THAT I ACCOMPANIED THE EMPEROR'S ARMY TO RESTORE ALL THE LOST TERRITORY OF HAN AND TANG. I SAW A RICH, POPULOUS CITY AND WAS TOLD THAT THIS WAS LIANGCHOW. IN MY JOY I STARTED TO WRITE A POEM IN THE SADDLE, BUT WOKE BEFORE IT WAS FINISHED. NOW I AM COMPLETING IT**

Since the time of Tien-pao, when two capitals fell to the
Huns,
No Han garrison has been stationed in the northwest,
For five centuries the land has been abandoned.
Now our sage ruler issues the order and heads the campaign,
A million warriors follow the Son of Heaven;
Before his command goes out our land is retaken,
Ramparts are built far away, new maps presented,
Guards drawn up by the emperor's tent, amnesties proclaimed;
Hills and streams as far as eye can see are ours,
Documents in these regions use the Chun-hsi era;
Now six regiments of guards are fine in brocade,
Drums and bugles fill the air in the autumn wind,
The foot of Alfalfa Peak bristles with defences
And beacons are flaring all the way to Turfan,
While the girls of Liangchow, crowding their high towers,
Are combing their hair like the women of the capital.

**I CLIMB YIHSIEN TOWER IN THE RAIN TO WATCH THE RIVER RISE**

A rainy vapour veils a thousand peaks,
The river's thunder shakes ten thousand homes;
Clouds burst, the whole sky blackens,

Foam is tossed through the air like blossom,
Waves surge through empty pavilions,
Broken rafts bob up and down. . . .
My thoughts turn to that stirring voyage in days gone by,
That intoxicating descent through the Yangtse Gorges!

## CALLIGRAPHY

All my money has gone on three thousand gallons of wine,
Yet they cannot overcome my infinite sadness;
As I drink today my eyes flash fire,
I seize my brush and look round, the whole world shrinks,
And in a flash, unwitting, I start to write.
A storm rages in my breast, heaven lends me strength,
As when dragons war in the waste, murky, reeking of blood,
Or demons topple down crags and the moon turns dark,
In this moment all sadness is driven from my heart,
I pound the couch with a cry and my cap falls off.
The fine paper of Soochow and Chengtu will not serve,
Instead I write on the thirty-foot wall of my room.

## THOUGHTS BEFORE DAWN IN AUTUMN AS I STEP THROUGH THE WICKER GATE FOR A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

A thousand miles the river flows east to the sea.
A million feet the mountain soars to the sky;
But the tears of the conquered are lost in Tartar dust,
One more year must they watch the south for our emperor's
arms!

## THE GREAT STORM ON THE FOURTH OF THE ELEVENTH MONTH

Stark I lie in a lonely village, uncomplaining,
And dream of defending Karashar for our state;
Late at night on my couch I hear the driving rain,
Iron-clad steeds cross a frozen river in my dreams.

## FALLEN PLUM BLOSSOM

Cruel snow and raging wind bring out its courage,
Staunchest and noblest of flowers!
Its day done, it is content to drift away,
And would think shame to beg the spring for mercy.

Half drunk, I pluck two sprays of faded plum,
Caring nothing if peach and cherry are all the fashion;
For when the ground is locked in ice and snow,
This is the flower that brings spring back again.

## LAMENT FOR A PEASANT HOUSEHOLD

He has sown every slope with wheat,
Sown every stream with paddy,
His oxen's necks are rubbed raw to the bone,
Yet still at night he goads them on to plough.
His last ounce of strength goes into farming,
And all he asks is to be left in peace;
But who is this come knocking at his door?
The county officer clamouring for taxes!
He is haled to the county court,
Bastinadoed day and night;

All men dread death,
But he sees no way out. . . .
Home again he longs to tell his wrongs,
Yet shrinks from upsetting his parents,
For to provide the two old folk with food,
He is ready to sacrifice his wife and son.

## OLD AND AILING

Old and ailing, of no use to this great age,
I may still pick chrysanthemums by the eastern fence;
So poor that when I hold up the skirt of my gown,
My elbows show through the holes in my ragged sleeves;
When I shrug my shoulders, my shoulder-blades stick out. . . .
Half my days have been spent in drinking,
And nothing is left of my life's work but some poems;
But no matter if no one shares my views today,
I can wait for those yet to come!

## TO MY SON

Death ends all, that is sure,
But what grieves me is not to have seen our land united;
The day that our imperial arms win back the Central Plain,
Mind you sacrifice and let your old man know!

*Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang*

*TSUNG SHU*

# Lu Yu, Poet and Patriot

Lu Yu was born in 1125, on the thirteenth day of the eleventh month by the lunar calendar in the reign of Hui-tsung of the Sung dynasty. His father Lu Tsai, then assistant commissioner of transport in Huainan, was taking his wife by boat up the River Huai to the capital Kaifeng. The poet was born on the river during a violent storm. And this storm, accidental as it might seem, was quite symbolic of the age he was to live in, for that same year the Nuchen Tartars, who in 1115 had set up the kingdom of Chin in the north, grew strong enough to launch armed aggression against the Sung empire.

The invasion of the Nuchen Tartars aroused widespread resistance among the people and rank and file of the army; but the corrupt and luxury-loving ruling class adopted a shameful policy of compromise and appeasement, and banished, disbanded or suppressed those officers and men who were eager to defend their

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Tsung Shu is a young scholar specializing in classical Chinese literature.

country. As a result, the Tartars took the Sung capital in 1126, and captured Emperors Hui-tsung and Chin-tsung, as well as many noble families and much wealth. Chin-tsung's younger brother Kao-tsung went south of the Yangtse and after six troubled years succeeded to the throne in Hangchow in 1132, setting up the Southern Sung dynasty in the southern part of the country.

From his birth Lu Yu was affected by the fighting and unrest, for his family had to move from place to place, and this helped to imprint on his young mind a deep hatred for the aggressors. After the situation in the south became more stable, his father retired to their native district of Shaohsing, where all his friends were patriots. When they discussed the corruption of the government and capitulationist policy of the prime minister Chin Kuai, who had made a shameful peace with the Tartars and was sending them annual tribute like a subject state, they were too consumed by indignation to touch the food and wine set before them but would leave their host in distress. And after Lu Tsai had seen his friends out, he would sit alone, dejected, with no appetite. All this Lu Yu observed as a child and later recalled in his writings.

The scholars and men of letters who often visited Lu Tsai also spoke about different schools of literature and problems of literary style. Lu Yu learned from them much that was of value, and he was a studious lad who by the age of twelve had more than a nodding acquaintance with poetry and prose. By his late teens, when he began to write seriously, he was lucky enough to meet the distinguished poet Tseng Chi, and from Tseng Chi, whom he much admired, he learned the rules of prosody.

It was usual for Chinese intellectuals in those days to take an official post after making a careful study of the classics. Those who aspired to serve the state and the people must first pass the official examinations and gain their degrees. In 1153, at the age of twenty-nine, Lu Yu went to Hangchow for the provincial examination.

Chin Hsun, a grandson of the treacherous prime minister Chin Kuai, was sitting for the same examination. But the examiner Chen Tzu-mao was a just man who did not let himself be intimidated by powerful officials, and judging the candidates on their merits he boldly placed Lu Yu first and Chin Hsun second. This so incensed the prime minister that the following year, when

the scholars went for the court examination, he not only struck Lu Yu's name off the list but intrigued to ruin Chen Tzu-mao. Fortunately he died before he could carry out this infamous scheme. Lu Yu, receiving no official post, returned home to write poetry and study military treatises and swordsmanship, to prepare himself to fight for his country.

Some time after 1158 he was appointed to the first of a series of minor official posts. When his fame as a poet attracted the attention of the young emperor Hsiao-tsung who had come to the throne in 1162, Lu Yu was made a secretary to Kao-tsung who had abdicated, and in this capacity he drafted some important diplomatic and military documents. In the Southern Sung court there were two parties, one for appeasement, the other for fighting the Tartars to recover China's lost territory. Kao-tsung and Chin Kuai were the leaders of the party for capitulation, and even after Kao-tsung abdicated in favour of his son Hsiao-tsung and Chin Kuai died, the capitulationists still retained great power.

During this period Lu Yu served as a government inspector of garrisons in Nanking, Chinkiang and elsewhere under the command of Chang Chun, a general who was for resisting the aggressors. He and the general discussed how best to restore the empire, and made many proposals to the government regarding military tactics and political reform. But when the appeasement group became all powerful, both Lu Yu and Chang Chun were dismissed from their posts.

Lu Yu, then forty-two, went to live in retirement at home. He loved country life and liked to share a bowl of boiled taros or some other humble fare with the peasants, and to warm himself at the same bonfire. Some of the poems he wrote during these years, like *A Visit to a Village West of the Mountains,* show true feeling for the countryside; others describe his contentment in poverty; yet others express the frustration and indignation of a patriot who felt that time was slipping away yet he had made little contribution to his country. This is the theme of *Listening to the Rain.*

My heart is stout as in the days gone by,
Yet fleeting time has silvered my sparse hair;
Life's little span is quickly past,

But will no end be made to men's distress?
Why must a fish, eager to travel far,
Perish at last like foxes in one burrow?
Late at night, listening to the pelting rain,
I sit up and my face is bathed in tears.

In 1170 Lu Yu was once more appointed an inspector, this time at Kueichow in Szechuan. The poems he wrote during his journey there reflect his mental conflict: fervent longing to serve the country but bitter disillusionment at what he saw. He remained in Kueichow for three years. In that mountain town in the interior, far from the northern outposts, a prey to gloom and dejection, he compared himself with the great Tang poet Tu Fu (A.D. 712-770) who had stayed in the same district and felt distressed because his gifts were not used. At the end of this term of office Wang Yen, who was for fighting the Tartars, became commissioner of Szechuan and appointed Lu Yu as inspector at Nancheng in Shensi in the north. On the eve of his departure, he wrote this poem to express his joy and optimism:

South to far Fukien and Canton, west to Chengtu,
I have ridden over half the empire;
Mountains and rivers may block my way,
But towering crags can be scaled and torrents crossed. . . .
Peach and plum are blossoming now in the spring breeze,
Ramps soaring through the air amaze my eyes;
Just grant me sound health, a good appetite,
And a journey of ten thousand *li* will seem a pleasure trip!

He hoped by going north to fulfil his lifelong desire to take part in the war against the invaders. And he did, in fact, have opportunities in this new post to discuss plans for an offensive, study the terrain and pass on orders and instructions to the troops. *A journey South of the Mountain*, published in this issue, gives a fine description of southern Shensi with its spirited and resolute people, and he proposed that the government should take over the strategic and fertile plateau further north in order to control northwest China and then advance eastwards along the Yellow River to recover the lost territory.

Lu Yu went many times to the front and took part in several skirmishes there. The northwest is cold and, riding in iron armour

after the Tartars during a sharp frost, his hands were frost-bitten, and sometimes he had no warm food for days. No hardship deterred him, however, and occasionally in his enthusiasm he would go with his comrades through heavy snow to hunt tigers in the mountains. In later years he referred again and again, with tremendous zest, to this period of rigorous army life, expressing his love for his country and his determination to defend it. This was his passionate desire even in his last years.

Patriotism so permeated Lu Yu's whole life that whether looking at a painting of a horse or flowers in bloom, listening to the cries of wild geese, drinking wine or practising calligraphy, he would be reminded of the need to wipe out the national disgrace and take revenge on the aggressors. This was reflected in all his writing, and even in his dreams. Few other poets have felt so strongly. The poem *I Sigh* is typical of his resolute devotion to his country.

I sigh and sigh again,
For my journey never ends
And my last years are in the grip of frost and ice;
At sunset only the cries of birds and beasts
And pounding of clothes on the rocks fill the lonely village,
While dead leaves cover the tumbledown post-station;
White-haired, ten thousand *li* from home,
I have fallen upon this lair of leopards and tigers,
Where by the roadside a corpse devoured by beasts
Has stained the grass and brambles red with blood. . . .
My heart, steadfast as stone or iron,
Puts aside all thought of home, set on serving the state;
Yet despite the times past counting I have risked death,
It has not profited my home or country.
Long has the Central Plain been torn by war,
Loyal men and true must weep;
But do not despise us scholars,
We can ride to strike a blow at the enemy!

The people were eager to fight, and for half a year Wang Yen, Lu Yu and other officers made active preparations for a northern expedition; but then the capitulationist party in the Sung

government had Wang Yen transferred to the court, and our poet's hopes were dashed once more.

After this set-back, his poems which had been full of confidence in victory became more pessimistic in tone. On his way back to Szechuan with his family, they ran into a snowstorm at Chiameng station and as he sat alone by the flickering lamp at night, he drank wine and wrote a poem. In an attempt to throw off his depression, he wrote *Encountering Light Rain at the Sword Pass* in humorous self-deprecation. This gallant fighter now saw himself reduced to a poet riding on a donkey. But mingled with his sadness there was still indignation and discontent.

But his ardent desire to reunite the empire never abated, as is clear from two other poems in this issue, *Written in My Cups at Night on the Seventeenth of the Third Month* and *News Comes of Fighting Among the Tartars.* Lu Yu remained fully confident that victory would come in the end, only regretting that he had no chance to die for his country.

In 1175 Fan Cheng-ta went to Szechuan as commissioner and invited Lu Yu to serve as his adviser. The two poets often drank and wrote poems together, and Lu Yu frequented taverns in an attempt to throw off his depression. Some people regarded him as a hedonist, and he called himself the Care-free Old Man. He visited all the gardens near Chengtu and wrote ten poems on flowers which are well known and show his love of nature. *A Stroll Through Some Gardens in Blossom Time* used in this issue is one of them. But his superficially passive and hedonistic attitude could not conceal his undying patriotism. *Moonlight over the Mountain Pass,* written in 1176, is a feeling and penetrating depiction of the reality of that period, the luxury and corruption of the rich and noble in the troubled days of war, the misery of the people in the areas occupied by the Tartars, their longing for the Sung army to advance north to rescue them and the generals holding back their troops and allowing the soldiers to waste their time doing nothing while the invaders remained unbeaten. In *Beyond the Frontier* the poet dreamed of marching beyond the border to capture enemy strongholds and hunt tigers and wild geese. His spirited imagery shows something of his fervour.

One thrust of our swords splits a mountain in two,
One shout from our warriors shatters a city wall;
Our men-at-arms are a host past numbering,
Like silver hills on the march they shake the earth.
With long spears we hunt tigers east of Mount Chilien,
Dragging our bloodied game back before our steeds;
Then east to shoot wild geese by the Yalu River:
Arrows fly and like black clouds birds darken the sky.
Returned to clear springs and lush grasslands,
We slaughter an ox by our tents, goblets brim with wine;
Not for us the life of young lords in the capital,
Flicking spittoons with their whisks as they prattle and play.

Lu Yu's poems of this period are polished and deeply moving, combining dignity with spirit. He had attained his full stature as a poet.

In 1178 he returned east from Szechuan, and from 1181 onwards he stayed in his home district Shaohsing, where he continued to write many poems voicing his indignation at the failure to recover China's lost territory. Other verses describe his life in retirement, as, for instance, *The Vegetable Garden.*

For a hundred cash I have bought a green coir cape,
Not envying those who wear long golden belts;
Rain pelts down on the slope of withered willows;
Who will paint me as I carry home my hoe?

Watering My Garden gives further indication of his complex feelings.

In my youth, wearing a sword, I roamed the land;
Aging in a deserted village, I water my plot;
All my former friends are gone, I am old and ailing,
To whom can I unburden my heavy heart?

Sometimes when he took up his brush to practise writing, he would become carried away and write poems like *Calligraphy* in this issue. Calligraphy is a distinctive Chinese art, and by dashing off characters he was able to express his pent-up emotions.

In 1186, when he was sixty-two, the need to earn money forced Lu Yu to accept the post of prefect in Yenchow. It was spring-

time when he went to the capital to receive his appointment and wrote *After Spring Rain in Hangchow.*

For years I have brushed aside worldly affairs,
Why should I ride off to stay in the capital?
All night in my attic I hear the spring rain fall,
Apricot blossoms will be sold in the lanes tomorrow.
I dash off some slanting lines on a short strip of paper
And by the sunny window prepare fine tea;
Never mind if my white clothes are soiled by dust,
Early in the fourth month I shall be home again.

These lines reflect his disinterested attitude towards officialdom.

After serving for three years in Yenchow, Lu Yu went to court to become a secretary in the Ministry of Ceremony, but was soon dismissed for speaking too bluntly. In 1190 he went home again to live in isolation and poverty.

He was passionately devoted to his home and farm, and prided himself on his integrity. When government officers came to collect the taxes, he sometimes had to pawn his clothes to pay, but as he said in one poem:

It is right that a man should be poor,
I would starve to death sooner than bow to authority.

He made close friends with peasants, dressed simply, read farming manuals, "hobnobbed with old peasants" and "tilled the soil though growing old." The country people did what they could to help him and he liked to feast and drink with them and express the indignation in his heart. Having made a study of herbal medicine, he sometimes strolled to nearby villages to cure the ailments of his friends. During this period he wrote many poems about country life and landscapes, and these simple and natural verses express his deep, understanding love for the people. *Lament for a Peasant Household* in this issue condemns the cruel exploitation of farmers by harsh officials. *On the Way to Ping-shui in Early Summer* reads:

Life holds few pleasures for the old,
A year slips easily by and once more spring is gone;
By the market bridge are loads of sleek water-mallows,
In the village inn heaped platefuls of plump peas;

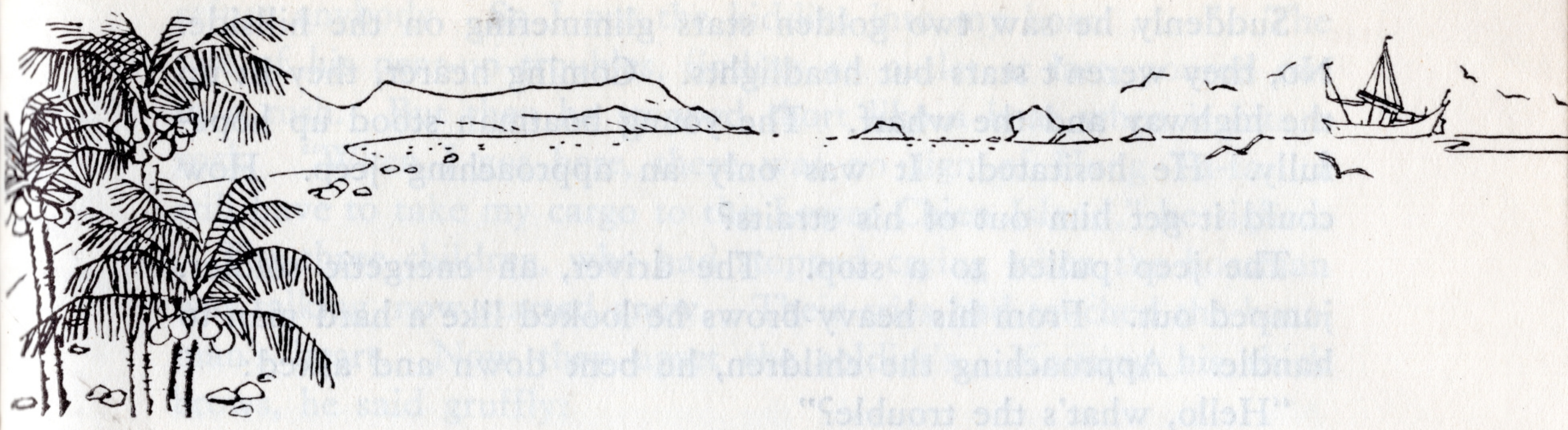
Orioles chatter in wind-stirred trees beside the stream,
Butterflies hover above the dim grass of the garden. . . .
Warmed by walking through the country,
In the shade of a plane I change into lighter clothes.

Urbane verses like these, conveying the flavour of daily life and conjuring up scenes so concisely, form another important part of Lu Yu's poetry. At the same time *Thoughts Before Dawn in Autumn as I Step Through the Wicker Gate for a Breath of Fresh Air, The Great Storm on the Fourth of the Eleventh Month* and similar poems show his pride in the magnificent mountains and rivers of his motherland and how his heart ached for the lost territory.

Lu Yu spent his old age in Shaohsing, living a peasant's life. In 1202 he was summoned to Hangchow for about a year to help compile the official history. He was in his late seventies then and failing health made it impossible for him to take an active part in politics; but he was now producing more poems than ever before, writing with complete ease. His style, once so gallant and splendid, had become simple and natural. *Old and Ailing* is a self-portrait and a summary of the poet's life.

In the autumn of 1209 Lu Yu caught a chill which settled on his lungs. One cold day early in 1210 he died, leaving more than nine thousand poems. On his deathbed, he could not forget his compatriots under Tartar occupation. His very last poem, *To My Son,* expresses his undying concern for his country.

Patriotism pervades every line of Lu Yu's poetry and is more strongly in evidence after his visit to Szechuan in middle life. His devotion to his country and determination to serve it in the hour of danger were unequalled by his contemporary poets, and rarely rivalled in all early Chinese literature.



*KU KUNG*

# Delivered Safe and Sound

At dusk three kiddies were crying lustily on an island wharf. By their side stood a young boatman, stripped to the waist, his bulging muscles gleaming in the slanting rays of the setting sun, like a boat newly painted with tung oil. He was a person of strength but at the moment he didn't know how to use it. He hadn't the faintest notion of how to soothe the children. It was plain that he had absolutely no experience in such matters.

A lone bright cloud between the heavens and the sea gradually dimmed, like a piece of burned-out charcoal. The darkness thickened. But the wails of the three kiddies by no means abated. Their shrill cries rose in pitch, one after another. At his wit's end the boatman, hugging his bare arms to his chest, plunked himself down on a rock. Fuming, he stared into space. He blamed the mother of these children who had thrust them upon him. He cursed their father who had not turned up at the wharf to meet them. He also reproached himself for accepting such an unusual "cargo" so casually. He still had to deliver his regular cargo to the Lesser Chien Island.

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Ku Kung is a young poet. His works include *At the Foot of the Himalayas*, a collection of poems, and *Glorious Footsteps*, a collection of essays.

Suddenly he saw two golden stars glimmering on the hillside. No, they weren't stars but headlights. Coming nearer, they lit up the highway and the wharf. The young boatman stood up hopefully. He hesitated. It was only an approaching jeep. How could it get him out of his straits?

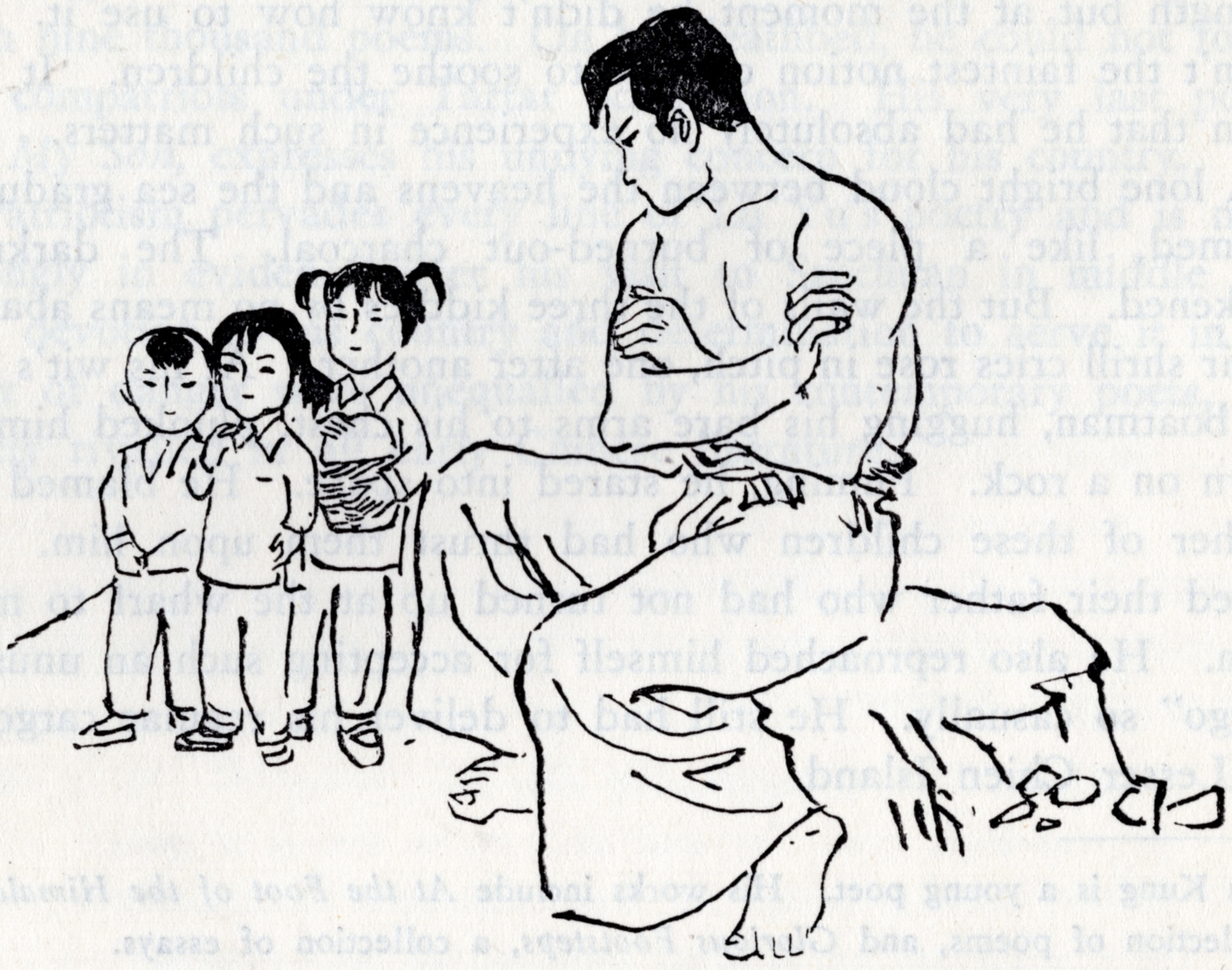
The jeep pulled to a stop. The driver, an energetic soldier, jumped out. From his heavy brows he looked like a hard man to handle. Approaching the children, he bent down and asked:

"Hello, what's the trouble?"

"They can't find their home. They can't go home," said the boatman, groping for the right words.

"Why not?" the soldier was puzzled.

"As I was casting off this afternoon the mother of these three children shouted from the wharf to ask where I was going. 'To the Lesser Chien Island,' I said. 'Will you pass by the Greater Chien Island?' she pressed. 'Yes,' I replied. 'Can you drop these three children off there? My mother has fallen ill suddenly and I can't leave her. But their father will be waiting at the dock. His name is Hung Ta-fa. Just hand them over. A thousand thanks. . . .' I am the kind of person who doesn't know how to



refuse anybody. So I put the kiddies into my boat. . . ." The tale of his pent-up troubles, finding an outlet at last, poured out in a rush. But then he stopped short like a boat when it hits a rock. "When I got here, there was no sign of Hung Ta-fa. I still have to take my cargo to the Lesser Chien Island," he sighed.

The three children, who had stopped crying when the boatman was talking, now started anew. Their cries had touched the boatman's heart. Now they upset the soldier's. Knitting his thick brows, he said gruffly:

"All right, hand them over to me!"

"To you?" Much as he wanted to get rid of his burden, the boatman was a bit doubtful. This soldier seemed a rougher type than the boatman himself. "What can you do for them?"

"I'll find their father." His answer was straightforward. It sounded easy enough. "Hey, kids, what does your father do?" he asked the children.

The eldest of the three had stopped crying by now. She looked about five. Her face was plump as a dumpling while her eyes, swollen from crying, bulged like a gold fish's. She knew it was time to speak. Still sobbing a little, she stammered:

"My father is Hung Ta-fa. He's a militiaman . . . leader of the militia. . . ."

"Fine, that will do."

The soldier lifted the three children into his jeep and placed them side by side on the back seat. Then he stepped on the accelerator and drove off.

It had never occurred to the boatman that before he could make up his mind the whole matter would be settled. His sudden release from the difficult assignment made him feel rather lost. He stood woodenly for some time before walking slowly towards his little boat.

## 2

The jeep tore down the sloping highway at top speed, rising and falling like a boat at sea. The young driver Chang Yu-lai was used to this. He had been transferred to this island more than two months ago and had made dozens of trips along this highway. He knew every hole and turn in it.

The road was bumpy but the jeep flew along. Chang was in a hurry. He was eager to see his mother. Things always happen that way. That afternoon, he had received a telephone call from the regiment telling him that his mother had come to the island to visit him. She was waiting at the regimental hostel. Putting down the receiver in an exultant mood, he adjusted his cap and was about to seek leave when the company commander came in. A walkie-talkie and two boxes of medicine had to be sent to the No. 5 Position at once, said the commander. They needed the medicine immediately. So Chang had swallowed his request.

He hadn't seen his mother for four whole years. He remembered the day he joined the army. His mother had driven the ox cart for him. She would not sit on it, though he had urged her to, for fear of over-burdening the production team's ox. She was a good walker for her age and could compete with any young girl with a load of forty or fifty catties on her shoulder pole. She must have walked a long distance before she could get a boat to come to the island. She was a queer sort who had no liking for vehicles. Even when she could ride she preferred walking.

Slowing down a little, Chang thought: Was his mother asleep now? Were the three kiddies sitting behind asleep too? He turned to look. No. Their eyes were wide open. They looked frightened and worried over what would become of them. The five-year-old had her arms around her younger brothers. One boy was about four. The other, not yet three, had a little fist in his mouth.

They must be hungry, thought the driver. He fished out a packet of biscuits from his tool box and tossed it to them. But the children paid no attention to it, letting it drop to the floor. They seemed to have no interest in biscuits. The soldier was somewhat disconcerted. "Hum, these little ones are hard to please," he thought.

The dark sea, shadows of trees, a cluster of stars or dots of lights from the fishing boats flashed by the window. Hands on the steering wheel Chang Yu-lai recalled his own childhood. When he was four or five he didn't even know what a biscuit tasted like. Once, he strayed from home and lost his way in the wilderness. He had cried and cried but nobody came to his

aid. The only living thing that paid any attention to him was a goat, which licked him with its tongue and scared him stiff. Finally at noon a man came by with a palm-leaf fan. The man — a child-trader — gave him half a cake and took him to the market. A prospective customer looked him over, but wouldn't buy him because he was too thin. Later an old man bought him in exchange for a hen. Chang didn't remember how his mother later found and redeemed him.

The driver's thick brows knitted together at this recollection. He turned again to see if the children in the back seat were all right, as if afraid that they too might fall into the hands of a child-trader. Of course, no child in China today will ever know what a child-trader is. That sort of man they haven't met and never will.

As the jeep neared a fishing village, Chang became worried. Could he find the father of the three children in this slumbering village? He need not have taken this trouble on himself. He had sent the walkie-talkie and the medicine to the No. 5 Position and all he had to do was return to the regiment. But no. The children's crying had stopped him. What was the duty of a soldier? Drilling, fighting, defending his motherland and safe-guarding peace. Right. Those were his duties. But he felt there were more than that. What if he saw the fields of a people's commune cracked in a drought or a fishing boat capsize or a fire breaking out in the forest? He couldn't ignore them. So of course he also had to heed the crying of these three kids.

"First I'll find their father. Then I'll go and see my mother. That is only right." Pleased with his decision, Chang Yu-lai turned and winked at the children. He was so elated that he laughed softly. "Don't worry," he thought. "Shed no more tears. We'll find your father."



The jeep pulled up at the end of the village. Chang carried the two little boys, one in each arm. The little girl, afraid of being left, followed close behind, clutching tightly the end of his army tunic. Chang was used to walking in big strides. But now, afraid that the little girl might trip he took small careful steps.

It was very difficult to walk so mincingly on the dark stone flagged road.

There was a line of windows, and one door followed another. Which should he knock at? Chang hesitated. He looked at the boys in his arms as if to ask their opinion. The younger boy was frightened by the strange place, the stranger holding him, the strange night and the shadows cast by the houses. His lips puckered and he again was on the verge of tears. Afraid that he might awaken people who had probably just gone to sleep, Chang rocked the boy gently with his powerful arm and hummed a rather tuneless cradle song.

Chang couldn't avoid disturbing somebody, it seemed. So he knocked lightly on a wooden door which was no higher than his shoulder. He heard an old woman mumbling inside. She fumbled with the latch a long time before unhooking it. When she saw him and the kids she gaped in astonishment. Chang told her his errand in a low voice. The old woman, craning her neck forward and cupping her hand behind one ear, tried hard to catch what he said. In the end she smiled understandingly and went inside. After more fumbling and groping around she brought out a kettle of water and a baby bottle. My, how mixed up she is! Chang Yu-lai could only sigh. He apologized for disturbing her and took the children away. As he was leaving the old woman tenderly kissed the little girl who nearly burst into tears again.

Before he had gone very far he saw a shadow flicker on the road. A person of small stature demanded severely: "Who goes there?"

"It's me." The soldier brightened. Good. If only he could meet someone young this time.

A bayonet flashed on a rifle and a girl of sixteen or seventeen suddenly appeared before him. The girl, surprised to find a soldier with a crew of children, showered him with questions: "Who are you looking for? Whose children are they? Where have you come from? Why are you so late out? Why have you brought them here?"

Chang Yu-lai didn't know which question to answer first.

The little girl behind him said timidly: "We've come to look for my father."

"What's your father's name?"

"Hung Ta-fa, militiaman." The little girl always remembered the name and work of her father.

"Why, he's our commander." The militia girl jumped with delight.

"Commander." Chang Yu-lai hadn't expected the father of these three children to be such a high-ranking officer.

"He's the commander of our militia unit." The militia girl, who was on night duty, spoke of her leader with pride and dignity. "Come on, I'll show you the way."

The path they followed was tortuous. Stone steps rose up and up and then went down and down. The rifle on her back and leading the little girl by the hand, the militia girl again asked a string of questions. Chang replied as briefly as possible: "Yes," "No," "Right" and "Good." He disliked girls who chattered, and he was unaccustomed to talking with them.

They came to a stretch illuminated by moonlight. The girl turned and her eyes met the soldier's. Chang tried to hide his face behind the sleepy little boys in his arms but didn't succeed. "Why, we've met," the girl's exuberance increased.

Chang had thought he had seen her before. He vaguely remembered meeting a girl of her size, who liked to chatter and ask questions. But where? He couldn't recall. Huh, why bother his head over this? Get the children to their father quickly and then he could go to see his mother. Ah, now he remembered. He had met the girl in a sweet-potato field.

A month ago, his unit had gone to help a commune turn some sweet-potato vines. Chang didn't like the work. It was too light. He couldn't use his strength freely. He had to squat and slowly advance. This was work for the women, he thought. He should be doing something which required him to move about. A girl

working in the next row was very nimble and soon caught up. He felt a little embarrassed. The girl, who was now ahead of him, turned to ask: "Have you ever worked in the fields before?" Hum, what a question! Was it a casual remark or did he catch a note of sarcasm? Embarrassed, he made no answer. "I've reaped more grain than you've eaten from the day you were born," he had thought to himself.

It had never occurred to him that he would meet her again here. Had he known earlier he would have made a detour. His thick brows knitted again. But the girl wouldn't let him off so easily.. In high spirits she declared she could not only beat him in field work, she wanted to challenge him in marksmanship as well. She shook her rifle proudly.

They had walked so far that the sea came into sight again. Under the starlight it stretched endlessly to the horizon like a virgin plain. Only a red beacon light, now bright now dim, pointed out the border between land, the sea and the sky.

". . . Aren't we there yet?" thought Chang Yu-lai. He felt if they kept on like this they would end upon the beach. Before he could blurt out his impatient remark the girl halted and laughed: "We've passed it." She turned around. "What a muddle-head," the soldier, quite angry now, muttered under his breath.

At last, they reached their destination. They pushed open the courtyard gate. No one was there. They pushed open the door of the house. No one there either. They lit the lamp. "Where has he gone?" the girl grumbled. The bed was untouched. There was nothing on the table. Under a framed picture they found a note scrawled in big characters: "I'm on patrol duty tonight. Won't be back till morning. When the children arrive please put them to bed." Hum. How simple. How sure and trusting this father was. He seemed to have taken it for granted that his children would meet someone like the soldier.

The militia commander in the picture had thin brows, a flat nose and a wide mouth that had a frank and optimistic quirk. From the corners of his eyes the soldier compared him with the children in his arms. Hum. They looked a bit alike. The boys were sound asleep. Not a trace of their tears remained. Their lips were parted slightly, as if in imitation of their father's pic-

ture. Obeying their father's instruction, Chang "put the children to bed." The militia girl let down the mosquito net. The children breathed softly, rhythmically. Home, they were home at last. Sleep well, children. Tomorrow, when you open your eyes you'll find your father smiling at you.

Chang left the house with a slight feeling of reluctance. The militia girl quietly closed the door. Full of friendliness, she offered to show the soldier the way but he waved his hand and strode off. As his shoes slapped upon the stone walk, he felt light-hearted and tranquil.

At the edge of the village as he was about to enter his jeep someone called: "Hello, are you the PLA soldier who has brought the children home?" In the moonlight he made out a man in his fifties, hurrying towards him. He must have been running for he was panting for breath.

"Thank you so much, comrade. Ta-fa asked me to meet his children at the wharf before he went on patrol. But I missed the bus. I ran all the way. But I was too late. The boatman, who was just leaving, told me that a PLA soldier had taken the children home in a jeep. I ran back again. *Ai*, I haven't done what Ta-fa asked me and I've given you a lot of trouble besides."

"No trouble at all," said Chang, patting the man on the shoulder. Getting into the jeep, he turned on the headlights, waved and drove away.

## 4

The little jeep, sharing Chang's light-heartedness and tranquillity, rolled steadily along. To Chang this small island became more beautiful every day. The scenery seemed to be getting greener, the sea was turning bluer. In fact all the colours grew constantly more vivid. The clouds over the island changed their shape with remarkable rapidity. Just look at that one there. Didn't it resemble a fragrant tuberose?

Men were silhouetted in a line against the rocks in the distance. Starlight played on their bayonets. Militiamen on patrol. The one in the front seemed to Chang to have a big wide mouth — it was imagination of course. Chang couldn't see his face. But

there was no doubt in his mind that this was the commander of the militia unit. Chang wanted to shout: "Do you know that your children have come home?" But he didn't. The militiaman, walking in front, seemed to have understood. He kept waving his hand.

The night flashed by the window, now darker now brighter. The soldier's thoughts turned to his mother. She must be asleep. Should he awaken her when he got back to regiment? No. He mustn't. Tomorrow, he would tell her why he was late. He would tell her about the three children, the boatman, the old woman in the village who opened her door to him, the militia girl and the children's father. At the time, he had been dissatisfied with all of them: the boatman for being too rash, the old woman for mixing things up, the militia girl for being too vivacious, the militia commander for taking too much for granted. But now, even though he had only just left them, Chang was fond of every one of them. Even their special traits appealed to him. What would his mother say when he told her about these people tomorrow? She would smile, no doubt. Yes, she would smile.

The jeep sped on.

*Translated by Yu Fan-chin*
*Illustrations by Hsu Chi-hsung*

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*Shock-workers of a People's Commune* (coloured woodcut) by Yang Hsien-jan ▶

Yang Hsien-jan, born in 1930 in Yentai, Shantung Province, graduated from the Central Institute of Fine Arts, Peking, in 1952. Originally a painter, he turned to work on woodcut in 1956 and has been known as a woodcut artist ever since. The new life in the countryside has been the theme for most of his woodcuts in recent years.

# How the "Bai" Learned a Lesson

(*Uighur*)

Once upon a time in a certain village lived a man named Hamit and his beautiful wife, Jeilapa. Though they worked from morning till night they remained poor. But their love for each other was the talk of the whole village. "Look, they are the poorest among us, yet they are the happiest and the most harmonious of all husbands and wives. Never have they quarrelled, not even once."

All the villagers were glad to see them so happy except *Bai,** who was secretly jealous of Hamit.

"Why should a man as poor as Hamit possess such a beautiful woman? . . ." thought the *Bai.*

One winter, Hamit came across two water-melons in a patch in the forest when he was out cutting wood. He had never seen melons as big as that, especially in winter. He brought one home. "Just look, I have a fine melon for you," he said to his wife.

As he took up a knife to cut the melon Jeilapa stopped him. "Water-melon is rare in this place, even more so in winter. Why don't we sell it to a rich man and buy some grain for the winter?"

"Quite right," Hamit agreed readily. "Whom shall we approach? Who do you think will buy it?"

"Take it to the *Bai* the richest man in our village," Jeilapa suggested.

So Hamit took the melon to the *Bai* who bought the melon happily. "Do you have another one like this?" he asked.

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* *Bai* means a man of substance, a landowner.

"I have one more growing in the same plot as this one."

"Bring it here quickly," said the *Bai*. "I'll reward you with anything you touch with your hands in my house. But I'll take away anything I touch in your house if you fail to bring me a second one."

Hamit agreed and went home happily. On his way home he thought to himself: "I'll bring him the second melon and then I'll touch the chest where his money is kept. According to our agreement, he'll have to give it to me. I will become rich."

When he returned home he told Jeilapa of his agreement with the *Bai*. "Do you remember the place where the melons grow?" His wife asked concernedly.

"Of course," said Hamit. "It is on the left side of the forest beyond our village."

"You must go there at once. Woe to us if the melon has been taken by somebody else."

"What does it matter?" said Hamit.

"The *Bai* will come to touch me and take me away." Jeilapa was very worried.

Two men sent by the *Bai* who had been eavesdropping outside the house as Hamit and his wife were talking now sneaked to the forest and took away the melon.

When Hamit got there and found that the melon was gone he was so grieved that he dared not go home. He wandered about for a long long time until he came to a wide rapid river. He sat down and meditated on the bank. What could he do? He was at his wit's end.

Suddenly he heard someone calling for help. He ran forward. An old man was floundering in the stream. Hamit jumped into the river and pulled him out. The old man, panting, asked, "How can I thank you?"

"I have no need for anything. No one can save me from my misfortune," Hamit answered.

"Tell me about it. I might think of a way out," the old man urged.

So Hamit confided everything to the old man who said: "You must go home at once. Let your wife climb up to the attic and stay there while you go and invite all your neighbours over. Then you can call the *Bai* who will want to touch your wife and take

her away. He will try to reach the attic by climbing the ladder when he hears her voice. You must say in front of all your neighbours as soon as his hands touch the ladder: "Take my ladder, *Bai*. You have touched it with your hands."

Hamit liked the plan and promptly returned home. He followed the old man's instruction and called the *Bai* who trotted over immediately.

"Do you remember what we have agreed upon?" the *Bai* asked.

"Yes," Hamit answered. "You can take as yours the first object your hands touch in my house. Here are the witnesses I have invited."

The *Bai* walked around the room, his hands behind his back so that he should not touch anything accidentally. Suddenly he heard Jeilapa's voice from the attic.

"Come down," the *Bai* called to her.

"I can't. I'm too busy," said Jeilapa.

With his hands behind his back the *Bai* started up the ladder which was leaning unsteadily against the wall. He climbed the first rung, then the second. As he was mounting the third the ladder began to wobble. Frightened, he instinctively clutched it.

"Ah, *Bai,*" cried Hamit. "You have touched the thing you want in my house. You may take the old ladder home."

Hamit and his neighbours placed the ladder on the *Bai's* back and pushed him out of the house. The *Bai,* followed by a laughing crowd, carried it laboriously.

"Our *Bai* already had one fine ladder. Now he's got two of them," they jested.

# The Clever Bargantzan

*(Mongolian)*

## I

Bargantzan was known for his shrewdness. People said, "Bargantzan has more brains than the lord has cattle." These words infuriated the conceited official. "An outrage," he fumed. "A slave cleverer than us aristocrats? I'd like to see how many heads this Bargantzan has." He began seeking an opportunity to match his wits against this famous Bargantzan.

One day, riding on a fleet horse, the lord came across him on a stretch of wild grassland. Bargantzan was smoking with his back against a slanting tree. Still astride his horse, the official demanded:

"Are you Bargantzan?"

When Bargantzan saw it was an official speaking to him he did not bestir himself. "I am," he answered.

"I hear that you are a big liar and skilful cheat. Is that true?" asked the official.

"No, Your Excellency. But people say I am very clever."

"All right. I give you this challenge. If you can deceive me I will admit defeat. If not I'll cut your head off with my sword."

"Not today please." Bargantzan pretended to be frightened. "I've left my wit pouch at home. When I have it with me, I am able to make a fool of an emperor, to say nothing of an official like you."

The official was infuriated. "Go and get your wit pouch. I'll wait for you here."

"It will take too long if I have to make the trip on foot. Let's arrange to meet some other day; I don't want you to say I'm a coward. Besides, I'm busy today."

"That won't do," said the official impatiently. "You must meet my challenge today. If walking will take too long you can ride my horse."

"No, no. I am really busy today."

"Busy with what?"

"Can't you see that this tree is falling down? I'm propping it up with my back. How can I leave?"

"All right, I'll prop it up for you." The official passed his reins to Bargantzan, and took his place under the tree.

"Well," sighed Bargantzan helplessly. "You are forcing me to make a fool of you."

"No more bragging, Bargantzan. If you can't meet my challenge beware of your head," the official hissed.

"All right then, Your Excellency. Mind that you prop up the tree properly. Don't let a wolf get you while I go for my wit pouch." Jumping into the saddle, Bargantzan spurred the horse and flipped the reins. Like an arrow he darted across the grassland. Of course, he never went back to the official waiting with his back pressed against the tree.

## II

Sitting in a sedan-chair carried by eight men, followed by servants and guards and preceded by gongs and drums, a lord came across Bargantzan one day. Bargantzan was on horseback.

"Who is this insolent fellow who does not dismount and kneel by the roadside when I appear!" the lord thundered.

"It is Bargantzan who fears neither heaven nor earth," said the guards bringing the culprit before the sedan-chair.

"Yes, I'm Bargantzan," said Bargantzan, quite unruffled. "I didn't realize that I was in the presence of Your Excellency."

"Ah, hah . . . so you are Bargantzan. Are you the famous liar?"

"No, sir. I am very fond of telling the truth," Bargantzan replied.

"You are very clever, I have been told. Now, can you make me alight from my sedan-chair?" The lord, laughing complacently, thought he had given Bargantzan a hard nut to crack.

"No, I wouldn't dare to drive you from your sedan-chair. But if you should alight I can make you resume the seat."

"You mean that?"

"With my wit, it's very easy to do a little thing like that."

"He could do nothing if I absolutely refused to get into the chair," thought the lord as he stepped out.

As soon as the lord's feet touched the ground, Bargantzan laughed, "My clever lord. Have I not made you alight?"

The lord gasped at his own foolishness. His swollen eyes glaring, he crept into his sedan-chair without uttering a single word.

"There, my clever lord, having made you alight, I now have compelled you to resume your seat without the slightest resistance on your part. Thank you for listening to the orders of Bargantzan." Roaring with laughter, Bargantzan rode away.

*Translated by Yu Fan-chin*
*Illustrations by Li Yu-hung*

# *Notes on Art*

*TSO HAI*

## Huang Chou's "Gathering Water-chestnuts"

Huang Chou, artist in the People's Liberation Army, had just returned to Peking from a sketching trip when I called on him one Sunday. I found him busy at his desk in his studio. His hair was tousled, he had taken off his army jacket and was in his shirt sleeves working on a large figure painting. His desk was strewn with dishes of colour and ink-stones of various sizes, and many of his brushes were saturated with ink.

I did not want to interrupt his work, but already he was standing up to greet me. He looks solid, sturdy and younger than his actual age, which is thirty-eight. And he proved as cordial and hospitable as always, keeping up a cheerful running commentary as he showed me some old paintings he had recently acquired. Among these were a white eagle painted on silk by a Sung dynasty artist, *Hawk on a Juniper Tree* by Chang Shun-tzu of the fourteenth century, *Two Storks in a Bamboo Grove* by Pien Ching-chao of the fifteenth century, *Fishing Boat in Snow on the River* by Tai Chin (1388-1462) and *Green Landscape* by Shen Chou (1427-1509). This popular young artist is a connoisseur of old paintings. Indeed, his appreciation of the ancient masters has

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Tso Hai is a well-known art critic and essayist. He is particularly famous as a connoisseur of classical Chinese paintings.

The artist Huang Chou

fused with his original talent to give his work its distinctive qualities.

When he showed me his recent painting, *Gathering Water-chestnuts,* I was struck by the creative way in which he has combined traditional and modern methods of expression. This ink and water-colour shows rippling green waves, the distant sky, and girls singing as they gather water-chestnuts from their boats far out in the lake.

The scene reminded me of Huang Chou's home Lihsien in the province of Hopei, of the lakes round Paiyangtien in that

same region, and of the Yangtse Valley. Huang Chou left home as a child to accompany his father to the northwest. He became interested in painting at the age of twelve, started taking lessons at fourteen, and was particularly fond of drawing human figures. After liberation he joined the army's corps of artists and produced many paintings of army life. The year before last, going home for a lengthy visit, he illustrated Liang Pin's novel *Keep the Red Flag Flying* about three generations of peasants on the Hopei plain. He also painted the splendid scenery of Paiyangtien and some of the heroic people there. *Gathering Water-chestnuts* is obviously based on memories of his home district.

Huang Chou's familiarity with his native parts enables him to paint their people to the life. In the foreground of this picture are two boats of water-chestnut gatherers. The nearer of the two holds three girls, of whom the rower seems to be the youngest, while the two seated at the end, one in flowered trousers, the other in a green jacket, may well be her elder sisters. Apparently they have not been on the water long, for their basket is not yet full. In the small craft opposite are four more girls: the one on the right, in the prow, seems to be the eldest and may already be married; the three others look like her unmarried sisters.

It is easy to see that the girl in a green jacket sitting on the left side of the second boat is singing lustily, accompanied more softly by the one punting with a bamboo. Evidently the other oarswoman is a good singer too, for, her right hand on the oar and her left on her waist, she is waiting for these two to stop and give her a turn.

Beyond the reeds in the distance are six more boats filled with peasant girls, who are also singing to their hearts' content as they gather water-chestnuts. Their songs float out over the glimmering waters, up to the clouds, startling wild geese into flight.

The more I look at this painting, the more I enjoy it. Not only for the new spirit of the figures in it and the freshness and originality of the whole conception, but because of the way it carries forward the techniques of traditional Chinese painting. I refer particularly to such elements of traditional painting as the convention of shifting perspective, the technique of outline drawing and use of strong colours. Huang Chou has also experimented

successfully with certain other old techniques which are usually ignored.

If we turn this painting over and look at the back, we find that he has adopted a method common in earlier times, but one that has long been ignored. On the underside of the porous rice-paper, he has drawn ink outlines and superimposed colour washes, so that one can hardly distinguish the front from the back, and yet upon careful study one finds the painting in front appears in reverse and in slightly different form on the back.

On the four girls' boat, for example, the flowered jacket worn by the second girl from the left is not painted from the front only but from the back as well. Elsewhere, too, the artist has drawn on and coloured the reverse side to achieve effects in front that could be got in no other way. This painting on the back, for instance, can create an impression of greater richness and depth of colour in front; it can give a peculiar inner luminosity to the painting and make forms appear more substantial and three-dimensional. Hazy, distant views can also be most effectively depicted by the judicious use of colours applied on the reverse side of the paper.

When Huang Chou adopts traditional techniques, he does not take them over mechanically or become a slavish imitator. In this painting, for instance, every brushstroke whether in the deep folds of the clothes or tracing the outlines of the leaves is as dynamic and terse as if cut with a knife. This is due in part to the method of painting on both sides of the paper but is inseparable from the great original artistic skill and scrupulous attention to detail of the artist. In his lively, subtle sketches richly varied in forms Huang Chou originally combines Chinese and western techniques of line drawing. In other words, traditional Chinese methods have become part of his new mode of expression and are no longer purely traditional.

Huang Chou's friends know how much time he spends copying classical Chinese paintings. This is one aspect of his study of traditional techniques. He tries to adapt and make his own the best features of various traditional types of pictorial art ranging from Tunhuang frescoes and the New Year prints done by folk artists to classical masterpieces from the tenth century onwards.

*Reconnaissance*

To depict new characters and our new life, he makes outstanding use of such traditional techniques as the line drawing of classical painting or the use of strong colour in New Year prints and ancient frescoes. It is by these means that in his paintings of the Uighur people of Sinkiang he succeeds so well in reproducing the bright, glowing colours of their national dress and effectively presents their life and customs.

Huang Chou, as I have already indicated, has learned from foreign artists as well and taken great pains to master western ways of sketching. On this basis he has gradually worked out his own ideas on perspective, treatment of the human figure and kindred problems, and formed his own language of art, his own strong individual style. We know that to most orthodox western artists of today and modern artists doing representational painting perspective implies a view from a single view point (parallel perspective), whereas Chinese classical artists have used the convention of a shifting perspective.* In practice both methods may

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* Sometimes called "plural perspective"; according to which the artist consecutively shifts his point of view as he paints his scene across or down the scroll.

sometimes be used together, and this is what Huang Chou does. In other words, he may design a whole scroll according to the principle of shifting perspective and by this means brings all its parts into a unity; but in the key section he will use normal parallel perspective. This successful blending of Chinese and western methods has contributed to his distinctive and powerful style.

*Mother and Child*

Huang Chou has treated widely varying themes, yet his style remains consistently individual. We can see this in paintings on such very different subjects as *Reconnaissance* and *Mother and Child*. The theme of the former is typical of army life and based on the artist's long experience of soldiering. The three frontier guards are absolutely authentic and full of spirit; horses and dogs add vigour to the patrol's intrepid advance through a snowstorm, while the misty hills in the distance, suggested with a few strokes of light ink, are a significant part of the scene.

*Mother and Child* shows a babe sound asleep in its mother's lap and vividly depicts her maternal love. The concept of the painting is skilfully carried out with the aid of naturally disposed accessories: the sprays of apricot blossom and the two small donkeys taking their ease nearby create a stirring evocation of the atmosphere of spring and new life. The young mother's loose

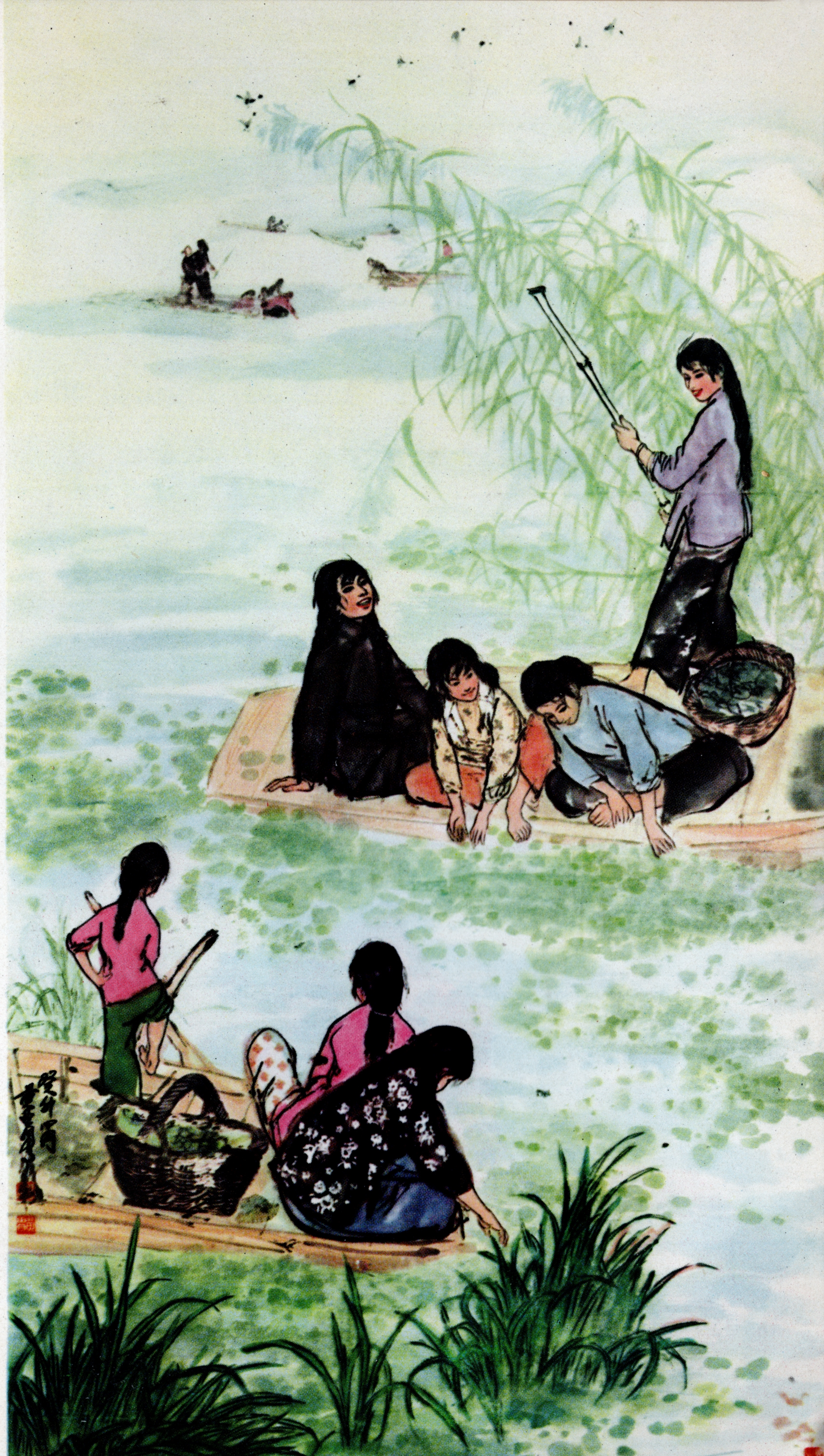
hair falls over her oval face with a natural, lively grace. These telling details, as in *Reconnaissance*, executed with such seemingly effortless strokes, testify to the artist's sedulously acquired virtuosity. His brushwork can be powerful or delicate at will. And it is thanks to this mastery of technique that he makes his characters so true to life and brings out their spirit so superbly.

I have been most struck by Huang Chou's passionate devotion to his art. He is never idle, but always busy sketching, copying earlier works or creating new ones. The sheer bulk of his rough drafts is quite amazing. His finished paintings form only a small fraction of his total output.

That Huang Chou takes his work very seriously is borne out by something I read in his notes:

"The old masters say you should apply the brush boldly but plan each stroke with meticulous care. For instance, you may draw the outlines of leaves swiftly, but the veins on the leaves should be drawn with meticulous attention to detail. I have tried this method and found it most rewarding. It has been brought home to me that when we study from the ancients we should do so sincerely and humbly. Conclusions must be tested in practice, methods tried out again and again. If after this we find the technique good, we should adopt it; if not, we must discard it. It is no use doing anything lightly, treating other artists with contempt, or jumping to hasty conclusions."

*Gathering Water-chestnuts* (Chinese ink and colour) by Huang Chou ▶



CHIEN CHI-HUA

# The Singer of the "Kone Nakha"

Last year when the leaves were turning brown in the autumn wind, we once again visited the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region in search of songs. The three and a half million Uighur people of this "land of dance and song" in northwestern China have a long history and a rich and varied art and culture. It was they who over the centuries created the famous *Mukam,* a monumental folk epic of two hundred songs, ballads, dances and instrumental music in twelve parts altogether. They too created the *Sanam,* a dance-song cycle describing their national customs, which is performed in all parts of Sinkiang at celebrations and festivals. Several years back we had travelled widely in Sinkiang collecting and recording various versions of the *Mukam* and *Sanam.* These have now been edited and recorded as priceless masterpieces of the treasury of Chinese folk music.

But we had heard of yet another song cycle known as *Kone Nakha* — Old Songs, which, originating in northern Sinkiang, is popular all over the region. On our previous Sinkiang travels we had often heard snatches of it and were much struck by the lyricism of its melodies. We learned that it too is a twelve-part cycle of 76 compositions mainly for the voice with musical accompaniment, preceded by an overture and with linking passages (intermezzo). However, we were told that if we meant to record the

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Chien Chi-hua is a young musician at present working in the Institute of Music of the Central Conservatory, Peking.

Abudu Wili playing *dutar*

*Kone Nakha* it was essential that we get the help of Abudu Wili, a famous Uighur singer. So now we were on our way to fulfil this mission.

We met the singer, a warm-hearted man in his fifties, in Ili, a city shaded by tall poplars. When he learned the purpose of our visit, he promptly picked up his *dutar,* plucked the strings, and began to sing for us. He played with the skill of the "born" musician, and listening to his mellow voice, we recalled what we had been told about his early life.

Forty-six years ago when he was only seven, his father, a cart-driver, died leaving him and his mother without support. Borrowing a small sum of money from friends, his mother sent him out to peddle sesame candy hoping he could earn something to keep them alive. Abudu Wili remembers to this day the tune he used to cry his wares; it was short but had a catchy melody. When he was twelve, his mother apprenticed him to a boot-maker who often sang beautiful Ili folk songs while he worked. Young Abudu

Wili, bent over his last, listened intently. Two years later, he had learned his master's skill in making boots as well as all his songs and music.

When Abudu Wili was fourteen his master sent him to a leather factory to continue his apprenticeship. The factory employed about five hundred boot-makers coming from all parts of Sinkiang; many of them were village folk singers. To lighten the burden of their toil, they often sang. One singer would break into song while all the others worked silently, listening. When one song came to an end, someone would carry on with another. On such occasions, Abudu Wili listened with rapt attention. He got to know several well-known folk singers in the factory and it was from them that he learned to sing songs of the *Kone Nakha*. He had a good voice, was modest and eager to learn; everyone was glad to teach him the songs they knew. During his three years in the factory, his workshop was a classroom where he learned folk music.

The *meshirep* (joyful gathering) is a Uighur institution. It is an evening party with twenty to thirty people participating in dancing, singing and music. They usually take place at week-

A performance of *Kone Nakha*

ends on the lovely river banks in the spring time, in the orchards or melon gardens in summer and autumn and indoors in winter. It is a popular form of recreation to this day. Folk artists are usually asked to help out with the entertainment and seventeen-year-old Abudu Wili when he first took part in such gatherings sang as one of the chorus. It was at a *meshirep* that he came to meet Huseyin Tembur and Rozi Tembur, two famous Ili musicians and it was from them that he learned to sing the whole *Kone Nakha* from beginning to end, learning not only the words and music but also a great deal of their artistry. More frequent participation in *meshirep* gave him an opportunity to mix more with the people; he came to know better their likes and fancies, perfected his own skill as a singer, and became one of the most popular vocal soloists at *meshirep*.

When he was twenty Abudu Wili joined a local amateur art group and he began to sing for large audiences. He went on to work in this new artistic career for more than thirty years and is now particularly well-known for his singing of classical songs. Today he heads the Ili Song and Dance Ensemble.

Abudu Wili told us a great deal about the *Kone Nakha*. Developing from a simple anthology of folk songs, it has been perfected — pruned, supplemented, adapted and re-adapted — by professional and amateur artists over the past two hundred years into the present complete composition of twelve parts each consisting of three to eight songs.

The popularity of the *Kone Nakha* rests on the lyricism of its music and its general air of vigour and wholesomeness. Reflecting the history and life of the Uighur people over more than two centuries, it includes songs such as *Song of the Ditch Diggers, Song of the Wall Repairers* and *Taming the Waters* that describe the heavy labour of the people in the dark days of the past; then there are songs like *Nazikum* and *Anarkhan* which portray the indomitable men and women who rose in revolt against oppression, and tragic songs of love frustrated under the feudal moral code, such as *Chin Mu-tan* and *Kulianmukhan*.

The strains of these songs remind the free Uighur people of the lives their forefathers lived and their struggles against their oppressors. In the *Song of the Ditch Diggers,* the ballad singer sings:

The dike and channel are hard as iron;
Our spades bite in vain.
Wicked henchmen of the lord,
Watch us as we labour.

The waters of the Ili will soon rise
To sweep away the town of Huiyuan.*
The unjust officials will soon
Be driven away by the people.

*Chin Mu-tan* is one of the best known of all the songs in the *Kone Nakha.* It relates a true story of some one hundred and thirty years ago. Jalam, son of a Uighur woodcutter near Ili, fell in love with Chin Mu-tan, daughter of a farm labourer of the Han nationality. A local official who wanted to possess the young and beautiful girl tried to prevent the union of the young lovers on the score of their being of different nationalities and religious beliefs. One day, on his way to visit Chin Mu-tan, Jalam was murdered by an assassin sent by the official. When Chin Mu-tan learned of his death, she dashed to the side of her beloved, denounced the wicked official and then poisoned herself.

The opening lines of the song are:

I and my loved one,
Are always together,
From childhood onwards we have pledged
Never to be parted.

Their love thwarted, the lovers sing of their despair:

What traces are there
Of the withered leaves?
How can a heart tormented by love
Remain unbroken?

A fairly large part of the *Kone Nakha* consists of love songs expressing opposition to the feudal marriage system and praising those rebel spirits who have struggled for freedom of marriage and steadfastness in love.

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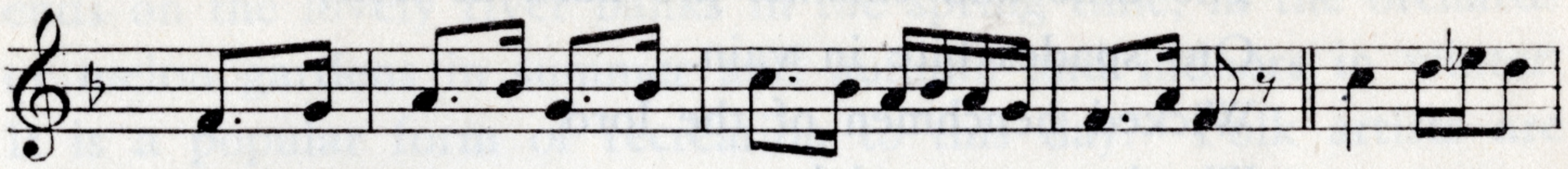
*East of Ili, where officials were stationed.



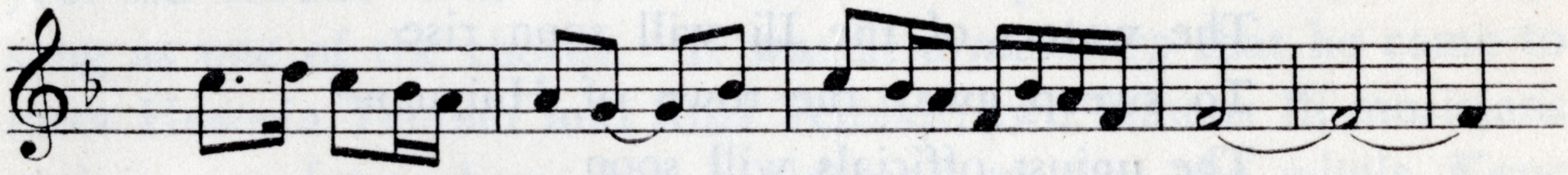


Fig. I

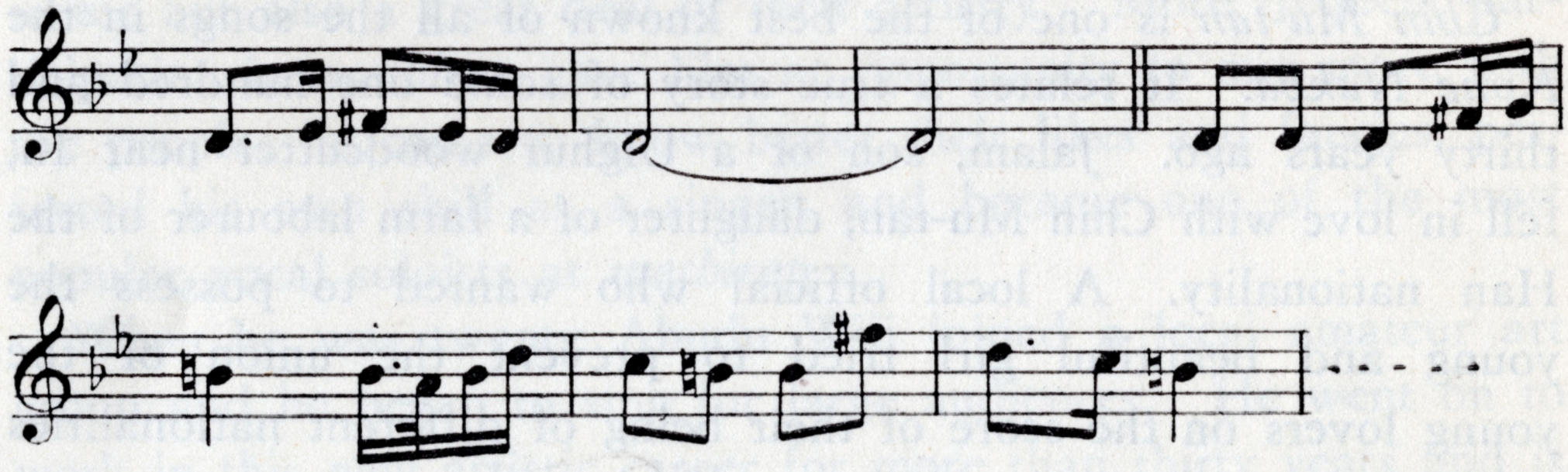


Fig. II

Uighur poetry and music are inseparable; poems are usually expressed in songs. The *Kone Nakha* is mainly vocal music; the instrumental part being simply an overture, played by the accompanists before the songs begin, and the intermezzos between songs. The principle according to which the songs are grouped into its twelve component parts, each a separate song cycle in itself, is the similarity of theme and mood of the music as well as its key. For instance, the songs telling stories of a similar type and happening in the same historical period are linked together while songs without a story, most of which describe the moods of love, are linked according to the mood of longing, admiration and sorrow expressed in the music.

The *Kone Nakha* presents a rich variety of modulation. Very few of the twelve song cycles begin and end in the same key. Modulation within a cycle is usually achieved by shifting to a lower key; for instance, if the first melody is in the key of F the next follows it in the key of B flat (see fig. 1). This is an example of modulation from a major key to the next major key. In another type of modulation, for the sake of contrast a major key succeeds a minor or vice versa (see fig. 2).

The musical arrangement within each of the twelve song cycles also follows a regular pattern. Relatively tranquil melodies are used at the beginnings and ends of cycles while the songs in the middle have melodies which rise and fall over a wide range of notes and express a stirring, turbulent mood. This gives variety to the melody line and prevents monotony.

Since the music develops in accordance with the content of the songs, the melodies of this work with its wide range of content are naturally highly developed. The words of the song are drawn out or given added trills or flourishes to provide ample time for the music to express the love sentiments of the singer.

The *Kone Nakha* is usually performed to the accompaniment of the *dab,* a hand drum, the *tembur* and *dutar,* both plucked instruments, and the violin. Skilled musicians provide just the right background for the singer to bring out the full magic of the vocal music. They also play an important part in linking the different songs together with their short intermezzos.

Thanks to the enthusiastic help given us by Abudu Wili, we recorded all the music and words of this great work of art without any difficulty and in a comparatively short space of time.

*Interview*

*FANG LI*

# A Visit to "World Literature"

The *Shijie Wenxue* (World Literature) monthly, as indicated by its name, has the task of introducing foreign literature to Chinese readers. It is one of several literary periodicals put out by the Chinese Writers' Union. First appearing in 1953, the journal celebrated its tenth anniversary in July of this year. Originally it was named *Yi Wen* (Translated Literature) after the periodical of a similar nature published in the thirties by Lu Hsun, the founder of China's new literature. Lu Hsun's *Yi Wen* introduced to the Chinese readers many revolutionary and progressive writings of the Soviet Union and other countries. But, like so many progressive periodicals published under the oppression of the Kuomintang reactionaries, it was forced to close down in less than three years. New China's *Yi Wen,* carrying on the tradition of its predecessor, has advanced steadily and developed into today's *World Literature.* I paid a visit to the editorial office on the eve of the journal's tenth anniversary.

The big building housing its office is on one of the busiest streets in Peking — Wangfutachieh. Many other literary and art periodicals share this building which belongs to the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles. I found the staff busy checking and editing various translations, but they received me warmly and delegated one of their members to answer my questions.

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Fang Li is a member of our editorial staff.

"Why have you changed *Yi Wen*, a name full of historical significance, into *World Literature*?" I asked first of all.

"True, we used the name *Yi Wen* for five years and a half," was the answer. "We liked it very much too. But our readers have changed. They have not only increased in number, but they no longer consist exclusively of writers, artists and those making a special study of literature. Besides reading literary works they want to read Chinese critics' comments on foreign literature. At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of Chinese research workers on world literature who are writing for our journal. Because the contents were becoming more varied and the scope of our monthly had widened, we adopted the name *World Literature* in January 1959. Would you like to have a look at some of our numbers before and after that date?"

I jumped at the chance.

We were standing before a book-case which displayed more than a hundred numbers of their magazine from the first to the latest issue. My informant gave me some impressive statistics: in ten years they have published the works of some 1,420 authors from 99 different countries. He took out several bound volumes and showed me the indexes. Looking at these I found that most of the questions I had intended to ask were answered. I was very interested to note that though this is a monthly of foreign literature, one can feel in it the pulse of our age. Quite a large proportion of space was devoted to works reflecting the life and struggles of the peoples of the world. Naturally, progressive socialist literature is also one main feature of this journal.

I opened the first issue published ten years ago and found the fine Soviet poet Mayakovsky's three poems: *The Left-wing March, The Soviet Passport* and *White and Black.* My host told me, "Chinese readers have always been particularly attracted to the literature of socialist countries. More than thirty years ago Lu Hsun was greatly impressed by the revolt against the old social system in Gorky's works. When we published Gorky's sketches *In Different Parts of the Soviet Land* and *Stories About Heroes,* our readers realized what a transformation had been brought about in Russia by the October Revolution. Not long ago we translated Fadeyev's novel *The Last of the Ugedeis,* which has proved very popular too. So are many other works

from socialist countries, especially those from Albania, Korea and Viet-nam."

His last remark reminded me that I had read the Albanian writer Spiro Xhai's story *Five Letters* in the journal. The five letters unfolded the love, separation and reunion of an Albanian couple, reflecting the different life of the Albanian people before and after the liberation. Then there was the story of a model worker's family *For Ever Red* by the Korean writer Kwon Jung Ung and *A Chau* by the Vietnamese writer Phan van Tai, who describes how a frontier guard wins the people's trust. All are fine, memorable stories.

The past ten years have brought great historical changes to the people of the Asian, African and Latin American countries. A new, vigorous and militant literature, with infinite confidence in the future, has been born of the people's ardent revolutionary struggle for independence and freedom. Chinese readers have a high regard for such writing.

"During these ten years *World Literature* has published works by 196 Asian writers," my host informed me. "Just to mention a few examples. *A Tiny Lame Fly* by Nakamoto Takako shows through the eyes of an innocent boy the reactions of the Japanese people to the secret service. Shimoda Masaji's *An Oath* reflects the just struggle of the Japanese people against U.S. military bases. Hirotsu Kazuo's *The Trained Sentiments* depicts the miserable life of a geisha girl. Ishikawa Tatsuzo's *Miracle* satirizes sham religion. From Indonesia we had Bachtiar Siagian's *Old Age Pension,* dealing with the Indonesian people's fight against the Dutch colonialists, and Zubir's *Loyalty,* a story about the heroic resistance of Indonesian Communists and patriots against the rebels armed by U.S. imperialists. *The Martyr* by the Lebanese writer Kendis depicts the people's anti-imperialist struggle. Works like these reflect the varied lives and struggles of this age. So do *Great Charities* by the Indian writer Yashpal, *Snatching the Dog's Meat* by the Thai writer S. Sarakan and the satirical novel *How Did I Commit Suicide* by the Turkish writer A. Nesin."

Turning to the literature of Africa, we immediately thought of *The Blood Will Never Be Dried* by A. Al-Hamisi of the United

Arab Republic. This is a tale about an old peasant woman who gave her life to protect some guerrilla fighters. At the end of the story the author says, "The blood will never be dried! It cannot be washed away! . . ." This is symbolic of the African people's ardent struggle. We also remembered the young Algerian poet Kateb Yacine. In his poem *Dancing by the Campfire* the poet sings:

On those blazing plains,
Among mountains stained with blood,
We press fearlessly on;
Confident that victory
Waits upon our rifles,
Our hearts turn with longing
Towards the days to come!

*No Answer from Cell 7*, a reportage, by the Algerian writer Ahmed Akkache tells how fearlessly a revolutionary in the death cell meets his death. The Chinese writer Liu Pai-yu calls this a "work written in blood." The above-mentioned works have aroused a great response from Chinese readers, and such writing also occupies an important position in *World Literature*. Altogether 86 African writers have been introduced.

Thanks to this journal, the literature of Latin America has also become known to and loved by Chinese readers. Works by 96 Latin American writers have been published, and my host emphasized the increasing interest in Cuban literature during recent years. Of the Cuban writing published in the journal, Santiago Cardosa Arias' *Confessional,* depicting the staunch and resourceful sugar-cane plantation workers in old Cuba, and Raul Gonzalez de Cascorro's *Gente de Playa Giron* which praises the heroic new Cuban people's anti-U.S. struggle, have impressed readers most deeply.

"Latin American writers trenchantly expose the colonialist policy of the U.S. imperialists and reveal the misery of the oppressed," my host pointed out. "Works like Miguel Angel Asturias' *Panther No. 33* from the book *The Weekend in Guatemala*, Karlos Garset's *Debts That Can Never Be Paid Off,* Baldomero Lillo's *Air Door No. 12* and Ramon Amaya Amador's *La carcel verde,* bring our readers closer to the Latin American peoples and, by

increasing their understanding, make them sympathize all the more with the struggle of the Latin American peoples for a better tomorrow."

Emphasis on the literature of the socialist as well as the Asian, African and Latin American countries does not mean that due attention is not paid to contemporary western writers and the world classics. On the contrary, such works occupy quite a large proportion of space in *World Literature*.

"Many works by contemporary writers of capitalist countries have been published in our journal," I was told. "Just to quote some examples at random: we have published Albert Maltz's *Morrison Case,* Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea,* Steinbeck's *The Pearl,* Alberto Moravia's *Four Stories of Rome,* Heinrich Boell's *The Man with the Knives* and Friedrich Durrenmatt's *A Dangerous Game* as well as works of various schools by such well-known writers as Faulkner, Graham Greene and Alan Marshall."

"As to classical literature," he continued, "we have printed extracts from Japan's *Genji-monogatari,* India's great epic *The Mahabharata* and Egypt's *Book of the Dead,* as well as the works of Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy, Sienkiewicz, Nemcova, Jokai Mor, Shakespeare, Byron, Balzac, Flaubert, Stendhal, Merimee, Mark Twain, Jack London and others. And it goes without saying that all writers whom the World Peace Council proposes to commemorate are systematically introduced in our pages."

Although the main task of this journal is to publish literary works, it also carries revolutionary and progressive literary criticism from many countries. I remember reading in it Marx and Engels' views on revolutionary folk songs and political poems, Plekhanov's *French Dramatic Literature and French Eighteenth-century Painting from the Sociological Point of View* and Chernyshevsky's *A Critical View on Contemporary Aesthetic Conceptions.* Since 1959, articles on foreign literature by Chinese critics have been published too. For instance, Pien Chih-lin, a research fellow of the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences, wrote an article analysing the plays of Brecht for the same issue that carried a translation of Brecht's famous play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle.*

As a reader I have always enjoyed the column at the end of the journal called "Chronicle of World Literature and Art," which keeps us informed about writers of various countries. My host told me that this column is popular with other readers too. "That is because the Chinese reading public takes a keen interest in the life and work of foreign writers," he remarked.

In the past ten years *World Literature* has served as a bridge to bring Chinese readers in fluent translation literary works from all parts of the world. Some of the manuscripts were sent in by the authors themselves directly, and it was in *World Literature* that they first appeared in printed form.

As I left the editorial office of *World Literature* I noticed that everybody was still working just as intensively as on my arrival. This reminded me of a paragraph in their "To Our Readers" in the first issue published ten years ago: "The editors are deeply aware of the important responsibility they are assuming by taking up this glorious task. We shall do our best and never relax our efforts. . . . Inevitably, our journal will have its shortcomings, but we are determined to work hard and make each issue better than the previous one to meet the need of our readers." True to their word, they have done all in their power to meet the demands of their growing readership.

# *New Plays*

## On Guard Beneath the Neon Lights

Returning home from the theatre at night on foot, I still seemed to hear the audience's laughter and their comments during the interval, and to see the gripping action as *On Guard Beneath the Neon Lights* was being performed on the stage. It is a play in nine scenes by Shen Hsi-meng, Mo Yen and Lu Hsing-chen, directed by Mo Yen and produced by the Nanking Front-line Drama Troupe.

The curtain rises on the skyscrapers, cinemas and shops of Nanking Road, the flashiest street in Shanghai, in the middle of the summer of 1949. Through the misty night distant gun-fire can be heard. This great city known as the "paradise of adventurers" has just been liberated by the Chinese People's Liberation Army; but U.S. and Chiang Kai-shek agents like Old "K" have stayed on in secret, confident that within three months of their arrival in Shanghai the Communists will be corrupted by its decadent way of life. The task assigned to the Eighth Company is not to advance to a new front but to garrison Nanking Road. Below is the exchange between some of the main characters in the play after they receive this new task:

*Company Commander Lu Ta-cheng: What? We're to do sentry duty?*

*Company Commissar Lu Hua: That's the idea. We're to stand guard on this spot to defend Shanghai.*

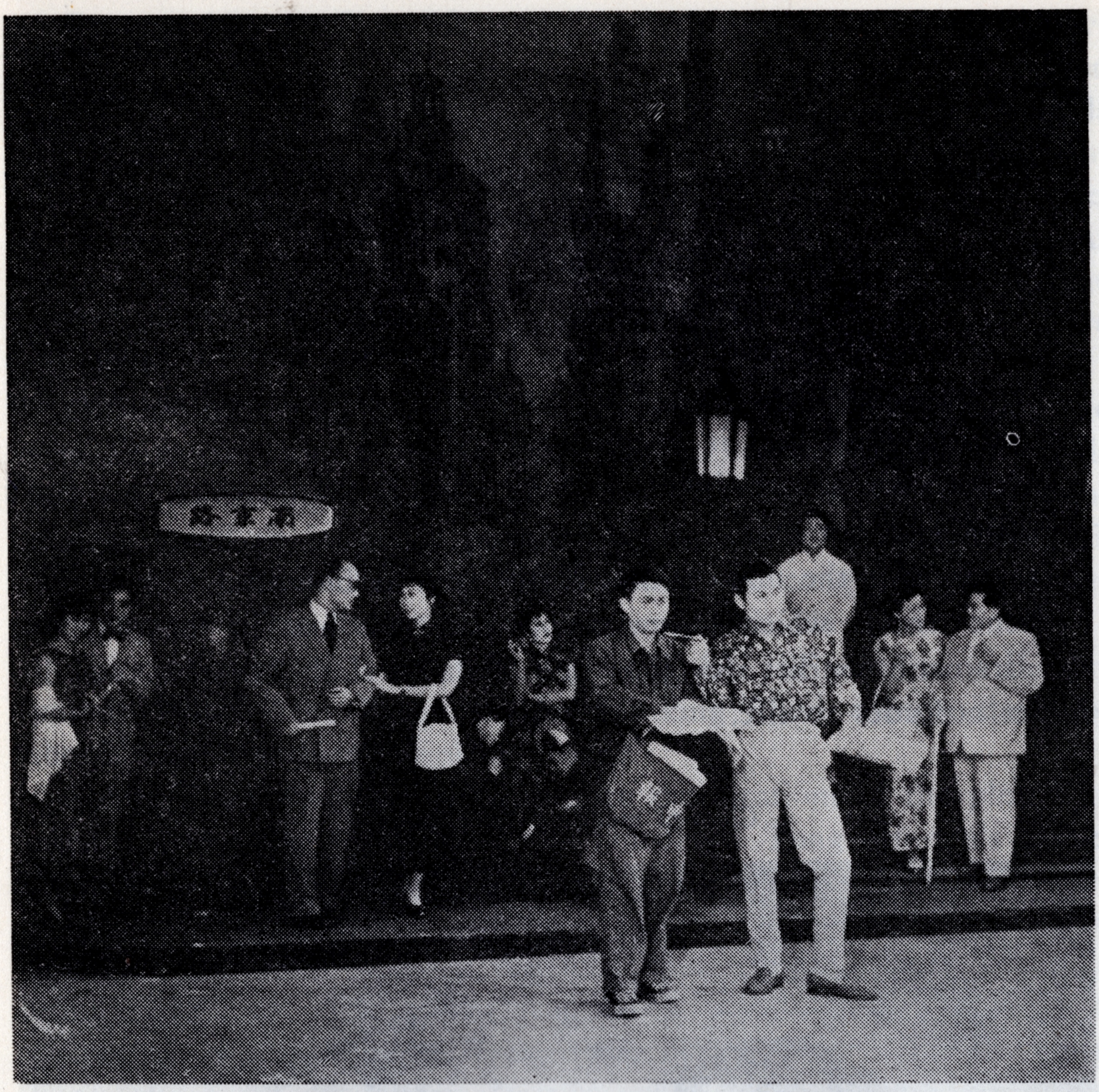
*Lu Ta-cheng: Fighting battles is what soldiers are for. This is the first time we've garrisoned a street.*

*Platoon Leader Chen Hsi: That's fine. We're the men who liberated Shanghai. It's only right we should guard it for a bit, to see what sort of a show Shanghai turns out to be!*

*Lu Ta-cheng: Shut up! Are you here to see the show?*

Having brought the characters into sharp focus in this way, the playwrights unfold the dramatic conflicts inherent in the situation.

It is an evening two months later. The neon lights on the high buildings are blazing with advertisements for the new opera *The White-haired Girl,* a story of peasants struggling against landlords who cruelly oppressed them, and the sexy Hollywood film *Bathing*



Nanking Road under the neon lights

*Beauty.* Revolutionary songs alternate with decadent jazz. This is the early stage of the liberation, a historic period of transition from the old to the new. On the stage appear characters of many types: Shanghai workers, intellectuals and capitalists as well as an American reporter. Some welcome the new life, some have their reservations, others oppose it and wait for an opportunity to sabotage it. For the PLA men this is a novel experience too. The enemy has been defeated in battle, but hidden enemies still exist who try to utilize Shanghai's old way of life to undermine the fighters' morale and corrupt them. So new problems crop up in this company.

Platoon Leader Chen Hsi casually allows a raw Shanghai recruit, Tung Ah-nan, to leave his post in order to take his girl friend out to dinner. And because he thinks Squad Leader Chao Ta-ta uncouth, liable to make the people of Shanghai laugh, Chen Hsi tries to keep

him out of sight and will not let him stand guard for his squad. When Chen Hsi has a visit from his wife Chun-ni, a selfless, patriotic village girl, he finds her too countrified, but he laps up the flattery of Mary Chu, an enemy agent posing as a student. Lu Ta-cheng and Lu Hua come to check up on the guard and ask:

"Is all quiet on Nanking Road?"

Chen Hsi promptly answers: "Why, even the wind here is fragrant!" "What utter rot!" says Lu Ta-cheng and Lu Hua adds, "Yes, the secret agents on Nanking Road are bad enough, but this suffocating 'fragrance' is even worse!"

"Unless we get straight on this," says Lu Ta-cheng, "we can't possibly hold our own here."

In this way, the main theme of the play is indicated.

Scene Three, which follows, is perhaps the best in the play, for the dramatic conflict develops into a sharp clash between two different attitudes to life.

Chun-ni mending for Chen Hsi

On one side are Chen Hsi and Tung Ah-nan. Chen Hsi is growing unduly interested in appearances and in going to the garden party to tell stories to Mary Chu and her friends. He responds coldly to his wife's loving concern and even forgets the third anniversary of their wedding. When she mends a tear in his sleeve, he is in such a hurry that he breaks the thread and runs off. As for the young recruit Tung Ah-nan, he finds army discipline so irksome and comradely criticism so unacceptable that he decides to leave the PLA.

On the other side are Lu Ta-cheng and others who maintain the fine PLA tradition of thrift and diligence, strictly carry out their task of defending Shanghai, and resolutely use their new revolutionary stand to influence people and transform the old Shanghai. When they notice Chen Hsi's backsliding, the company commander comments: "This 'fragrant' wind has got into his bones."

The contradiction is only just beginning, but the problem is sharply posed: Should the PLA men let Nanking Road corrupt them, or should they transform Nanking Road?

Scenes Four, Five and Six introduce ramifications of the plot. The enemy agent Old "K" years ago murdered Tung Ah-nan's father who joined other workers in a strike on Nanking Road. After Shanghai's liberation, Tung Ah-nan recognizes the secret agent, so the latter determines to kill the lad before he can talk. Late one rainy night men of K's gang grope their way to Tung's home and by mistake wound Lu Hua, who is looking for Tung. Lu Ta-cheng, Chen Hsi, Chao Ta-ta and Tung Ah-nan come swiftly to the spot. Lu Ta-cheng asks Chen Hsi: "Well, my fine platoon leader, see this? Do you still say all's quiet on Nanking Road?"

Stern reality begins to awaken Chen Hsi and Tung Ah-nan to the truth that Shanghai is still a battlefield, but a battlefield of a different kind. True, Shanghai is liberated, but can revolutionaries stand firm there? Will they transform the old metropolis or will it transform them? Should they carry on the revolution to the end, or stop on the threshold of its completion? In time of peace how should they wage the struggle?

The last scene of the play takes place a year later. Chen Hsi, Chao Ta-ta and Tung Ah-nan are given a farewell party when they join up as volunteers to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea, while their comrades remain on Nanking Road to defend, reform and reconstruct Shanghai. We are moved to see Chun-ni meeting her husband again and Chen Hsi fondly examining the sewing kit she

Company Commander Lu Ta-cheng and Chen Hsi

gave him long ago, and Tung Ah-nan standing guard for the last time on Nanking Road.

Liberation is not the end of difficulties; on the contrary it is the beginning of a series of sharp, complex struggles. The main thing is to hold fast to the right line and advance boldly against all obstacles. And this play gives a truthful, vivid picture of real-life conflicts in all their complexity. The characters are seen from different angles, some are outline figures, others receive more attention; but the main theme is clearly presented throughout and the dramatic denouements is skilfully achieved.

The different strands of the plot are not awarded equal importance, but the emphasis is boldly placed on the main issue — the ideological struggle within the ranks of the people — and this is fully brought out. "Of course the enemy is dangerous, but this 'fragrant' wind is even more hateful." This idea runs through the whole play, which seizes on the contradiction between Chen Hsi on the one side and

Lu Ta-cheng and Chao Ta-ta on the other to illustrate the main theme. The contradiction between these men is no mere clash of personalities but a serious ideological struggle.

If the ideas entertained by Chen Hsi had spread, men who had proved themselves heroes on the battlefield might have laid down their arms and given up the struggle when up against the unseen enemy and the "fragrant" wind of the metropolis. Clearly, then, before transforming the old city, the PLA men had to resist the influence and make themselves impregnable. Lu Ta-cheng puts this idea well when he says: "We've been through all sorts of campaigns, haven't we? We've seen all sorts of guns, fought in all sorts of positions. When we were first told to stand guard on Nanking Road, it didn't make sense to me. But now that we're here, we must stick it out. Unless I beat this 'fragrant' wind, I'm no true man!"

This play is based on real life, on the "Good Eighth Company" which has received high praise for its fine tradition. Shen Hsi-meng and his co-author Mo Yen have both served as rank-and-file soldiers, standing guard and carrying out reconnaissance under the bright neon lights on Nanking Road with the men of the "Good Eighth Company." By taking part in the company's life and struggle, these playwrights came to understand the soldiers' thoughts and feelings and the motives behind their exploits. This enabled them to grasp essentials and delve deep into reality to produce a play with a message of lasting significance.

Nanking Road is a real road, it is also a symbol. Those in the revolutionary ranks may encounter a "Nanking Road" during a time of great revolutionary struggle or at some stage in their own life, and it is worth our while to reflect just how we would stand "on guard" at such a juncture.

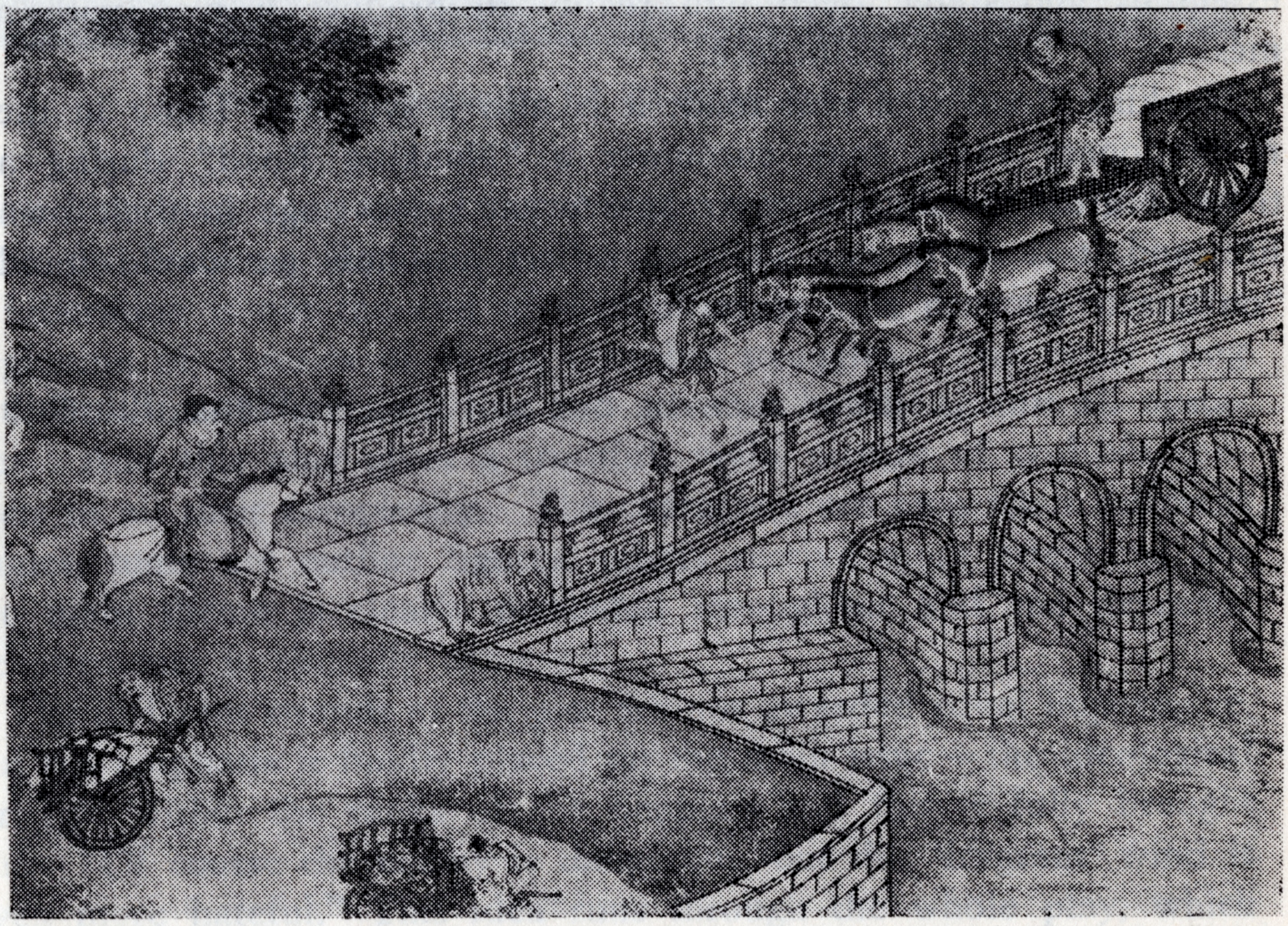
**— Wang Pin-chih**

# *Information*

## An Early Peking Landscape

In the Historical Museum in Peking is a painting more than six centuries old of raftsmen shipping timber by Lukouchiao, known abroad as Marco Polo Bridge. This painting on silk, 1.435 metres long and 1.048 metres wide, has a white marble bridge spanning the centre from left to right. At the right-hand approach to the bridge stand two marble pillars. Lions in different postures top each baluster, and the ends of the balustrades are supported by two elephants on the left, two lions on the right. These and many other details correspond exactly to the bridge as we know it today.

The surroundings are entirely different, however. A county town dating from the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) now stands on the east bank in what is still an open space in the painting. And the artist has shown us clusters of inns and taverns with trade signs hung above



*Shipping Timber* (detail)

their doors, for in the thirteenth century this was an important route leading to the capital.

On the banks, in this painting, are officials on horseback and in sedan-chairs, officers in charge of labourers, ordinary travellers carrying their luggage, and working men pushing carts or transporting goods. Their social status can be seen from their clothes. The officials wear hats with brims, round-collared gowns or low V neck robes. They have features common to the Mongolian ruling class of the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) and are hirsute, with high cheekbones. The travellers and labourers have typical Han faces.

It is interesting to note that in the timber yard on each side of the river sit two officers who seem to be supervising the men at work.

The broad Yungting River, which the bridge spanned, flows from northwest to southeast. Many rafts are gathered by the banks and the shores are piled with timber, some of which is being loaded on to carts to be taken away. The whole scene is full of life and bustle. According to old records, quantities of timber were felled in the Western Hills near Peking, shipped by rafts to Lukouchiao and thence transshipped by land to the capital for the construction of palaces and mansions.

In the background, east of the river, are wooded hills where old temples and pavilions can be seen. Mist over the woods gives the hills an air of depth and remoteness.

## "Stone Classics"

Before people knew how to print it was customary in China to inscribe books on stone. The inscription of a complete volume on stone started in A.D. 175 with the Confucian classics. Before this the classics had always been written on bamboo or wood. However, errors occurred in the copying which affected both the students and examiners. In order to correct these errors, the well-known writer and calligrapher Tsai Yung checked over the classics and wrote them in a red wash made from clay on slabs of stone which were then inscribed by masons. Seven classics totalling about 120,000 words were inscribed on 46 tablets. Each over a dozen feet in height and four feet wide, these tablets were erected in front of the gate of the highest educational institute, the imperial college, in the Eastern Han dynasty capital of Loyang. These "stone classics" were the earliest books inscribed on stone.

Thereafter, all the scholars in the imperial college corrected their copies of the classics according to the stone inscriptions and people came from far and wide to copy them. Every day, more than a hundred vehicles were parked in front of the imperial college and a stationery shop in the vicinity did a brisk trade selling writing implements. Later these stone classics were destroyed in a war and only fragments of them have been unearthed.

Early in the fifth century people learned to take rubbings from stone inscriptions. Volumes of rubbings began to appear, and these were the earliest form of lithographic printing. Many rubbings were made from the stone classics but none of these is extant today.

# Man of a Special Cut

*by Hu Wan-chun*

Gathered here are nine of the best stories written between the years 1955-60 by Hu Wan-chun who, apart from being a writer, also works in a rolling mill.

Most of the stories deal with the life and struggles of the working class, reflecting the communist spirit of the workers in socialist construction. "Man of a Special Cut" is a story of this kind which shows how a government cadre, by relying on Party leadership and closely co-operating with the workers, successfully completes the reconstruction of a railway track.

"Flesh and Blood," on the other hand, is a vehement indictment of the exploiting class and its reactionary rule in the old society. The author's words burn with a deep class hatred and his pen is inked with his own blood and tears as he writes about the capitalist exploitation and the sufferings of the workers in pre-liberation days.

Published by: **Foreign Languages Press,** Peking, China

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